

# COLLEGE ENGLISH

VOLUME 21

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NUMBER 5

## **Communication and Language**

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Harry R. Warfel: Syntax Makes Literature

John C. Sherwood: Dr. Kinsey and Professor Fries

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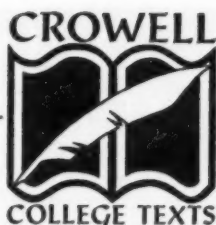
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# COLLEGE ENGLISH

Volume 21

FEBRUARY 1960

Number 5

## Wired for Sound: Teaching, Communications, and Technological Culture

WALTER J. ONG

*The author of over fifty articles on literary, religious, and social subjects, as well as two books on Renaissance intellectual history and two on modern Catholic problems, Father Ong, S.J., is a professor at Saint Louis University, from which he holds the S.T.L. and M.A. degrees. His Ph.D. is from Harvard, whose Press published in 1958 his two books concerned with Ramus. He has presented some of the ideas in this article to a meeting of the Greater St. Louis Council of Teachers of English.*

### I

From the time of ancient Greece, communication processes have always been at the center of Western education. Early academic study focused on grammar, which gave birth to rhetoric. Rhetoric formed a matrix for dialectic and logic, and all these conjointly help shape physics and medicine, and ultimately modern science. Through the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and into the nineteenth century, education began with grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic or logic, the *artes sermocinales* or communication arts.

Teachers are still especially interested in communication, not merely because they are incidentally involved with the process but because their work itself is communication *par excellence*. At the point where teaching is going on, the knowledge which men have accumulated and communicated to one another out of the past thousands or hundreds of thousands of years is being communicated again to inexperienced youth, to give this youth that experience reaching far back beyond one's own years which sociologists call culture. But as teachers channel this knowledge to succeeding ages, they do so by talking it over, rethinking it and recommunicating it among themselves. In the person of the teacher, who is the depository and communicator of knowledge, mankind con-

stantly reviews what it knows, reevaluates its knowledge, revises it, detects its deficiencies, and sets up the framework for new discoveries.

The teacher's work involves him in a constant interior dialogue with the past, the present, and the future. Since the only source of knowledge is the experience we have had up to the present time, or in other words past experience, he has to communicate with the past, to raid it for what it has to tell him. With his students, he puts out feelers into the future to orient his knowledge effectively. And he has to bring his knowledge of past and future into focus within the present system of communication, the one in which he has actually to do his teaching.

Hence it is not strange that teachers are sensitive more than other men to changes in communication processes. And teachers in the field of language and literature are most sensitive of all. In these fields a great deal of restlessness is observable today. The furor about why Johnny can or cannot read, the agitation concerning foreign language programs, the tendency of structural linguistics to replace older grammar, and the general overhauling of language-teaching and literature-teaching processes which has been taking place for the past thirty years or more are symptoms that something is stirring. What is it?



## II

Probably a great many things are stirring; but it is certain that many of them can be summed up by saying that we are leaving the Gutenberg era behind us. As we move further into a technological civilization, we meet with abundant signs that the relationship between the teacher and the printed word and hence those between the teacher and a large area of communication, which includes practically all of what we generally mean by "literature," are no longer what they used to be. These relationships were set up in the Renaissance when a typographical civilization appeared, climaxing the intense development of a manuscript culture which had marked the preceding Middle Ages. The present swing is to oral forms in communication, with radio, television (oral in its commitments as compared to typography), public address and inter-com systems, or voice recordings (to replace or supplement shorthand, longhand, typing, or print). As a result of this swing, older relationships are undergoing a profound, if not often perceptible, realignment.

Early teaching was aural and oral in cast. Socrates taught by means of person-to-person dialogue. Although Plato in great part extinguished this dialogue when he and his followers captured, stiffened, and mounted it on the written page, he nevertheless thought of himself as preserving dialogue itself by preserving its form or "idea." And although Aristotle seems to have moved further away from the dialogue form than Plato, a careful and astute reading of his works by Werner Jaeger, Joseph Owens, and others has shown how strongly the dialogic approach persists in them. Cicero's whole framework of culture was oral in a way in which the text-oriented Renaissance Ciceronianism could never be. To bring Greek culture to Rome, Cicero did not simply read books but went to Athens to listen to the oral exposition of philosophy there and thus to learn what to transmit *viva voce* to his compatriots. It is well known that Cicero first spoke what he had to communicate, delivering his orations first and writing them afterwards. St. Augustine remains similarly oriented. He was disillusioned less by Manichean

writings than he was at the oral presentation of Manichean teaching by Faustus, who, after exciting the highest hopes, explained so little and so unconvincingly. When Augustine heard the fateful words, *Tolle et lege*—we know from what he has to say elsewhere about reading habits in his day—he took up the Scriptures and read to himself *aloud*.

By contrast with the ancient world, the Middle Ages produced a more purely manuscript culture. But their teaching methods retained massive oral-aural commitments. Socrates' dialogue, to be sure, was reduced to the university master's monologue, eventually styled a "lecture" or "reading," since it was typically a commentary on a written work and itself regarded as something committed or to be committed to writing. Yet the practice of testing intellectual prowess by oral methods alone, such as disputations, was retained. Written assignments or written examinations after grammar school remained unknown and apparently unthought of. A thesis was not something one wrote but something one asserted and defended orally as one's inaugural act upon induction into the teaching profession. Medieval culture is thus a transitional culture, oral-aural at root but scriptural in bent.

The printed page completed the pedagogical shift away from the oral. It silenced the medieval disputation and, as Marshall McLuhan so well put it in the volume *Mass Culture*, "created the solitary student," and the school textbook as well. From the beginnings of printing the greatest source of revenue for book publishers has been the classroom and its purlieus. Early publishers liked to ally themselves with humanist educators. The massive plaque on Erasmus's tomb in the Münster at Basel is erected by three grateful publishers whom he helped make affluent: Amerbachius, Frobenius, and Episcopius. At a time when not more than a few pages of any book could be kept standing in type at any one time, the Wechel firm of Paris and Frankfurt-on-the-Main published at least one hundred and seventy-two editions of one or another work, almost all for classroom or academic use, by Peter Ramus and his literary lieutenant Omer Talon (Talaues). Erasmus, Ramus, and Talon are only three



among thousands of textbook authors whose works are published and read more than those of almost any "literary" writer.

The connection between printing and teaching was from the beginning as subtle and profound as it was financially successful. The notion of "storing" unassembled letters (and consequently dismantled words and books) in "fonts" of prefabricated type, which lies at the heart of the typographical developments of the fifteenth century, exhibits a close psychological connection with the doctrine of the *loci communes* ("commonplaces" or simply "places") taught in rhetoric and dialectic or logic classes in fifteenth-century schoolrooms. One "drew arguments" from the places as one drew type from a font. As the printed book took over, and with it faster and faster silent reading habits, the commitment to eloquence and oral expression lingering as a heritage from the Renaissance devotion to classical antiquity became, more and more, lip service. The "elocution contests" of a generation or two ago were the dying gasps of the old tradition. It seemed that the printed book had won the day.

It still seems so in the sense that it is unlikely that printing (or its recent manifold variants such as mimeographing or planographing) will ever be done away with in teaching or elsewhere generally. It is incontestably convenient to have the spoken word frozen in space, and frozen in exactly the same space for everyone among one's auditors. The teacher is not likely to forego the luxury of being able to say, "Everyone now turn to page 83, line 4 from the top, and look at the third word from the left." This luxury is too hard-won. For such a directive was entirely impossible before the invention of printing, when, if the students had manuscript books, every book would have every word in a different place from every other book. Except in certain academic horror stories, no one really seems convinced that the modern world is going to regress into a pretypographical or a preliterate culture. What is happening is more complicated than this. If students are losing their hold on reading and on grammar, this is in great part because, in their relationship to the other items involved in communication, reading

and grammar are not what they used to be. They are still there, and will be, but the constellation in which they exist is shifting its formation.

### III

One of the principal causes of the shift in status of reading and grammar is the increased importance of oral-aural communication in our technological society. It is paradoxical that a society given so much to the use of diagrams and to the maneuvering of objects in space (from giant aircraft to atoms) should at the same time develop means of communication which specialize not in sight but in sound. Yet the signs of a shift are everywhere. Grammar, which was originally the study of written language (*gramma* in Greek means a letter of the alphabet) and which, as normative grammar, has rules based less upon what speaking people do when they talk than upon what literate people do when they write, is yielding to linguistics, which, while it includes grammar, is rooted in the study of oral performance. The trend toward discussion groups has been under way for a long time. It manifests itself not only in the classroom under such guises as "Deweyism," but also in business, where meetings of all sorts have multiplied beyond calculation in the course of the recent managerial revolution. The same elaborate business organizations which solve many of their problems by computing machines have found that back of the Univac there must be large-scale and deliberate confrontation of person with person. Interest in group dynamics serves as a counterbalance to electronic computers. Often the most efficient way to attack a problem has been found to be the "brainstorming" session, where members of a group stimulated by the rest of the group as an audience, suggest orally whatever solution to a practical problem may stray through their heads, no matter how zany the solution may at first blush appear.

Libraries themselves have undergone significant reorientations. The oldstyle Renaissance public or semi-public library, with its books chained to keep the users from carrying them away, yielded some years ago to the lending library. Both these

institutions were spectacularly quiet. The new library makes allowance for noise, and utilizes noise. It includes seminar rooms and all-purpose rooms for larger meetings. Acoustic insulation, of course, has made these possible. But, by whatever means the effect has been achieved, libraries have recently become places where people can get together to talk. Our attitude toward books, our concept of what they are, is sure to be affected by such a change, especially as more libraries are being run on an open-stack plan. Librarians, including librarians of early lending libraries, until recently appear to have existed chiefly to keep books in the library, from which they would issue them with ill-concealed reluctance, placated only by thought of the savage reprisals which would result if the books were not returned by the detested borrower almost immediately. Today's librarians all want books to go out and feel frustrated if they do not. The result is that more and more books are now read in a world alive with sound, to musical backgrounds provided by radios and hi-fi sets.

The oral-aural emphases of today run counter to certain typical phenomena of the Gutenberg era as diverse as the invention of printing and the exploration and observation of the surface of the globe. These activities reached their peak together, and both focused attention in space and thus vaunted sight. The microscope and telescope, developed as epiphenomena of printing and exploration, did the same. But a new age is upon us, and its shift from sight-emphasis to increased sound-emphasis spans this entire area from the diffusion of the word to the exploration of one's surroundings. In the realm of words dictaphones replace shorthand writing, and audio charge systems replace written library records. Exploration no longer depends on moving the human body through space. It is conducted by radar and radio-telescopes (more informative in many ways than visual-type telescopes), and by sputniks, which are launched into space as little speaking voices. In these devices sight, of course, plays a role, but no longer so exclusive a role as before. Press reports on the first nearly successful moon rocket noted that at its apogee it could not be seen even with the most powerful lens

telescope on earth, but that it could be heard.

In their whole trend, modern developments in communications, while they have not slighted the visual, have given more play to the oral-aural, which a purely typographical culture had reduced to a record minimum in human life. The sequence of development running from silent print through audio-visual telegraph to the completely aural radio is an obvious instance of increasing aural dominance. Even television belongs partially in this visual-to-aural series, being only equivocally a regression to visualism. For the visual element in television is severely limited. The amount of detail feasible on a television screen is far less than that visible on a movie screen and not remotely comparable to that tolerable and easily discernible in photographs. Details on television have to be filled in aurally, by explicit vocal explanation or by suggestion through music and sound effects. Silent television is hardly an engaging prospect.

#### IV

Heightening the oral-aural element in a culture does much more than merely de-emphasize vision. It subtly heightens the personalist element in a culture. For the plenary development of sound, the human voice, is a manifestation of the person. Even more than it is a manifestation of an understanding of objects, speech is a calling of one person to another, of an interior to an interior. Sight presents always surfaces, presents even depth as a lamination of surfaces, whereas sound presents always interiors, for sound is impossible without some resonance. The post-Baconian pre-occupation with sight and "observation" produced the world of the Enlightenment, a world of objects and things without convincing personal presences, giving us the strangely silent universe which Newtonian physics and Deism both supposed. Printing was the harbinger of this Newtonian world, for printing is spectacularly allied with surface or "object" treatment of reality. Picasso's collages use bits of printed posters or newspapers to establish a sense of flat surface because print is sensed as indissolubly allied with surface. Scraps of printing in the collages serve precisely the function

of returning the eye from the perspective depths in other parts of the assemblage to the plane surface of the painting—it is unconvincing to imagine print on anything other than something relatively flat and smooth.

Strangely enough, although it is in part a visualist development, television has moved away from this effect of print. It has been a personalizing, not an objectifying, medium. The discussion panel, with its interchange of personalities, is properly a television phenomenon. Such personal interchange was difficult to manage on radio, for there individual persons could only with difficulty be kept distinct. Hence the use of voice was not brought to its fullest fruition. By the same token television is a more feasible means of education than radio. This is not because it can use visual aid devices (figures written on a blackboard on television cannot be seen by any viewer unless the camera is turned on them—they lack the permanent availability of figures on a classroom blackboard). It is because television better implements personal rapport between instructor and student.

But television is not the only manifestation of the growing interest in the human person which accompanies the resurgence of voice in our culture. Another manifestation is the self-conscious personalism of our times. The twentieth century, from one point of view the most mechanized of all the ages of mankind, is from another point of view the most personalized. No other age has generated a whole philosophy of personalism such as one finds in the works of Martin Buber, Gabriel Marcel, and others. At a much less reflective, more superficial, and nevertheless significant level, no civilization before our technological civilization has given such attention to problems of personnel and personality in matters even of industrial performance. The "I" and the "thou" have never been the objects of more explicit treatment than now. In the future, alongside the digital and analogue computers and other mathematizing developments such as Western culture has specialized in more and more over the past few hundred years, the human person will receive more and more attention, not in every quarter but in significant milieus and ways.

One may object that earlier civilizations were, and other contemporary civilizations are, more personal in certain aspects of their structure than ours. Modern Arab culture, styled by Marcel Jousse "*verbomotor*" (*verbomoteur*), is still almost exclusively personal in orientation (as a preliterate culture must be), acting in terms of personal loyalties and without much "objective" insight into issues. Such cultures can be both anarchical and, as Albert Camus well knows, absorbingly interesting from a human and literary point of view. This is because of their personalist orientation. But from another point of view, and an utterly basic one, such cultures leave much to be desired in this same personality orientation. Their respect for the elementary personal right to life can be quite minimal.

## V

The influence which the present cultural shift toward the oral-aural is having on language and literature study and teaching is probably most important where it is least crass and striking. To think of adapting courses to present trends by exploiting as gadgets the spectacularly evident new media—radio, television, tape recordings, inter-com—is to a certain extent to miss the point. These new media are not just new gadgets to be employed for what we are already doing with other less efficient gadgets. They are part of a shift which is inexorably affecting our very notion of what communication itself is. The question is not how to adapt television or tape recording to present courses in educational institutions or present courses to television and tape, for the present shift is sapping the very notion of a "course" itself. A "course" (Latin, *cursus*) means a running through. The concept of a "course" in a subject, derivative from the process of teaching by "running through" a text, is a relict of manuscript and typographical culture. Moving in a more oral-aural setting, Socrates never gave a "course" in anything, and indeed had no notion of what such a thing as a "course" might be.

This is not to say that "courses" in language and literature or in anything else are on their way out. Evolution does not proceed by jettisoning earlier developments

completely in working toward new ones. It tends rather to preserve earlier developments, even though these may have to be given new guises. Courses in language and literature are evidently going to be with us for a long time, perhaps for good. Nevertheless, their psychological significance is undergoing subtle and complex, but inexorable, change.

One way to express the nature of this change is to say that the old focus of literary studies on rhetoric is being replaced by a focus on dialogue. In ancient times, and through the Middle Ages, the cause of literature was the cause of rhetoric—which is to say the cause of the art of oratory. Poetry and all “ornate” expression was commonly referred to an eloquence which was associated basically with the oration or public speech before a group of persons. In contrast, the dialectic which split off from rhetoric and modulated into logic, first in Aristotle but more definitely through the Middle Ages, has pulled away from literature and helped generate modern science. The Renaissance sought to return from dialectic to literature by re-emphasis of eloquence and rhetoric, but the Renaissance effort foundered in the combined currents of an always ebullient scholasticism and of the modern scientism so closely related to scholasticism. Rhetoric and the areas of communication which it represented failed to develop any mature theoretical structure viable in the post-Newtonian world where neat theories seemed to account for everything else.

For some time now the Newtonian universe has been broken down, and the result has been a recrudescence of interest in language and literature. But the interest no longer centers on rhetoric, the art of persuasion, which in our day is much more the province of the advertising man and marketing specialist than of the *littérateur*. The more effective ally of literature has turned out to be the sense of dialogue which marks important philosophical developments of our age (and which is notably missing or *ersatz* in advertising). Literature is no longer standing so much alone as it did when “mere” rhetoric was arrayed against dialectic. It is painstakingly picked over by psychologists, physicians, sociologists, anthropologists, theologians, and

others. Certain typically modern philosophies of the “existentialist” sort have been described as literary philosophies, conscious of and using literary form, as exploited by Camus, Marcel, Sartre, and others. We have become explicitly aware in our time of the intimate linkage between the process of communication and human thought itself. Many of the illusions of the Enlightenment concerning private thought and psychological privacy generally have been dissipated since the discovery of evolution, of depth psychology, and of the processes involved in the history of human thinking. We are intimately aware, as Gaston Fessard and others have put it, that science itself is only arrested dialogue. Voice is not an accretion, but a necessary adjunct or even a necessary dimension of human thinking. (It should be added that the “dialogue” meant here is neither medieval dialectic nor Hegelian dialectic, although it is related somewhat to both. Dialogue refers here to actual vocal exchange between person and person.)

It is through awareness of the paramount role of voice in human activity that students of English or of any other language today must seek to understand the reactivation of the oral-aural element in human culture. Voice is coming into its own as never before. But the ways in which it is doing so, and the elements in our culture which favor voice as well as those which militate against it, are complex in the extreme. We can arm ourselves and our students only by vigilant awareness of what is going on about us. In particular, teachers and students of language and literature must cultivate sensitivity to the more profound significance of the media of popular culture—which is not the same thing as either uncritical acceptance of popular culture or entrenched hostility to all its manifestations. Any kind of genuine sensitivity to literature of any age or culture has become thoroughly impossible unless a person has grown seriously, not phrenetically—reflective about contemporary communications media. Men today—and, above all, high school, college, and university students—live englobed in a universe of sound emanating from radio and hi-fi sets which surpasses anything any earlier human culture has known, both in the total decibel

output at any given moment and in incessancy. Reflection on the condition of the new media and the changes they are effecting in human life will probably produce no

pat formulae either to describe the totality of the present situation or to prescribe highly simplified lines of action. But it should enable us to live.

## Syntax Makes Literature

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There has been bred in us an excessive adoration of words and an ignorance of or distaste for the systematic organization of words into syntax. If one follows Otto Jespersen in "Shakespeare and the Language of Poetry," Chapter X in his *Growth and Structure of the English Language*, the major element in the greatest of all English poet's works is words. The few references to the master's grammar and syntax are unperceptive and even denigratory, as in "He does not always place the words where they would seem properly to belong" (Anchor edition, p. 235). Jespersen, of course, was caught up in the late nineteenth-century preoccupation with morphology, so that he never quite saw the language system which makes possible the tension in words and meanings. Usage study is predicated upon the wholly false notion that words have the power to operate *sui generis*, as if the panes in a window exist apart from the frame. The three elements of a language—in the descending order of importance—are the system, the tune, and the words. The most valuable words in English are three hundred "little" structure words—*a, an, the, at, by, which, when, must*, etc.—that serve as the cams and gears of the machinery. The "big" words are only as important as the system makes them.

It comes as a shock to most people to realize that lists of words alphabetically arranged after being lifted from a poem become as dead as do the words in a dictionary. The art of the poet vanishes, the words wilt in meaning, beauty flees, and a void replaces emotion and idea. Words ripped from context become mere words;

were we to practice lexicography in studying poems and fictions, a wholesome and corrective truth would become indelibly imprinted upon our minds. For example, *divine, err, forgive, is, to* is such a list; there is no hint here of the meaning, beauty, or tension in Pope's "To err is human; to forgive divine." Words as words do not make literature: syntax does.

Jespersen is dead wrong when he writes, "As for the technical grammar of modern poetry, the influence of Shakespeare is not very strong" (p. 244), for Jespersen assumes that grammar and morphology are identical. When one examines the thousands of sonnets which have been built upon the syntactical patterns developed in Shakespeare's sonnets or even the influence of "To be or not to be, that is the question," one can realize that "technical grammar" has been viewed very narrowly by the eminent philologist. Grammar encompasses the entire patterning of the language; to fail to see the whole system is to call a cove an ocean.

Likewise Jespersen is dead wrong when he asserts that "in English a wide gulf separates the grammar of poetry from that of ordinary life" (p. 245). It is simply not possible for any poet to deviate from the systematic operation of language and retain intelligibility. The system has been created on the tongues of countless speakers; the poet merely employs artistically the devices which the common speaker uses artlessly outside the structure of tightly unified discourse. No poet has ever successfully violated the determiner-noun pattern as in "The man is here" by writing "Man the is here." What the poet may do is to give



occasional vivid play to some structures which seem irregular. Most of the time his work remains within the commonest patterns of speech. Even so-called archaic forms, to which Jespersen alludes, survive in speech somewhere in the broad geographical areas where English is the native tongue.

The inner dynamics of literature has barely been touched upon in literary criticism. There has been created no science for verbal art paralleling musicology. Harmony and tonality in literature are said to be discovered wholly in a few kinds of sounds (alliterations, rhyme, assonance, etc.). The interplay of syntax and metaphor or of syntax and sound has rarely been discussed; certainly there have been established no principles paralleling those familiar to the musician or painter. Yet the dynamics of literature lies in these interrelationships and not in surface patterns of rhythm and sound. Word-listing, rhyme-counting, and metric analysis carry a critic little beyond the scale, clef, and time indication of music. The significant differences in literature lie in an author's syntactical maneuvering.

A basic element in English is the marker-headword relationship. Such a sentence as "My plan will be to give a rapid sketch" (Jespersen, p. 1, with one word dropped) reveals that the iambic pattern in English arises from the systematic use of the structure words called markers (*My, will, to, a*), which are normally unstressed. The trochaic pattern results from an unmarked initial headword, as in "Plans are made by men like Wilson." In music the tendency is to shift such a trochaic pattern to iambic by simply putting a rest as the first sign in the first bar. If it is recognized that syntax creates the stress patterns of English, then the idea that syntax determines literary dynamics will not seem strange.

The most important syntactical maneuver in English is the substitution of word groups for single words in the four functions. An English sentence is not a sequence of words or of word classes; it is a patterned sequence of algebra-like functions. The basic functions are noun and verb, as in "Birds fly"; this pattern can also be filled by word groups thus: "That birds can fly is being doubted." The major

unitary groups are prepositional phrases, clauses, verbal groups, and verb groups. The outmoded concept of parts of speech merely increases the mystery of language when conventional analysis worries over each word as a word. When, however, the normal patterning process of the language is seen to envisage substitution as a principle, the interchange of words and word groups becomes a simple fact. When Walt Whitman wrote, "The other I am must not abase itself to you," he used the clause *I am* as a noun-headword in the noun function and did not hesitate to modify it in the usual way. Walt invented nothing here, nor is this usage a rare one in common speech. Walt was audacious in his syntax, that's all. By comparison with Shelley's "Be thou me," Walt's usage is far more expert, more true to the higher reaches of language potential than Shelley's. Shelley echoed a common speech form; Whitman exemplified a syntactical principle imaginatively. The vast amount of worry over Shelley's "bad grammar," as Jespersen would call it (p. 237), when compared with the failure to mention Whitman's dexterity, shows how unperceptive linguists' commentary and literary criticism have been in the analysis of poetic language.

The next most important syntactical maneuver in English is the somewhat freer movement of the adjective and adverb functions than the noun and verb functions in roving about in sentence order. An examination of any author's style will reveal quickly the extent to which he uses group verbals, clauses, and prepositional phrases in these functions; the number and the positions assigned to these word groups play an important part in style. Indeed, we begin to get to the heart of the dynamics of style when these elements are codified, and we begin to see in their positioning a parallel to musicology.

Word order takes on meaning when it is seen that small units have absolutely fixed order, and that some of these unitary groups can work in various positions. Because there is a sense of fixity in function order, inversion is a meaningful syntactical device. If the basic patterns did not recur so frequently and were not established as "normal order," the contrasting uses would not show up. Similarly, if the functions

were not filled so often by a headword, substitutions of word groups for the headwords would not become readily apparent.

Once the play between fixity and movability is grasped, it is possible to discover the adroitness and the art of the writer. An analogy may help us see this principle. In football, eleven players take their positions at certain places. Usually there are seven men on the line and four in the backfield. It is possible to vary this arrangement, but the variations must stay within certain limits. These variations and limits of football are the result of experience, and the variations and limits of language structure similarly result from the habits of everyday speech. Literature probably has never used a structure which has not been heard on the lips of many human beings. No poet has ever given a new syntactic structure to the language in the same way that some coaches have devised new positionings of players in football. The difference arises from the fact that the limits of the language structure in English seem to have been reached; football is rapidly reaching the same fixity as tennis, a game in which there has been no change in centuries. The players or words are different, but the operations remain the same.

If anyone believes that the maneuvering of players in varied positions in football creates the dynamics of the game, then it will not be difficult for him to see that an author's choice and arrangement of movable syntactic structures develops the dynamism of literary language. The strategy of literature is no less important than that of a sport. In the illustrations which follow from Whitman and Shakespeare, I should like to insist that authors manipulate syntax to achieve artistic effects, that these effects add a new level of meaning to a work, and that the successful use of the effects provides a wholly new insight into the psychology of authorship.

Here is Walt Whitman's "We Two Boys," in which the eye immediately sees twenty-five verbals ending in *-ing* operating in the adjective function. Some of these verbals play a dual role by having the power of a verb to govern "objects." The position of the adverbs and "objects" of the verbals should be examined.

We two boys together clinging,  
One the other never leaving,  
Up and down the roads going, North and  
South excursions making,  
Power enjoying, elbows stretching, fingers  
clutching,  
Arm'd and fearless, eating, drinking, sleeping,  
loving,  
No law less than ourselves owning, sailing,  
soldiering, thieving, threatening,  
Misers, menials, priests alarming, air breathing,  
water drinking, on the turf or the sea-beach  
dancing,  
Cities wrenching, ease scorning, statutes mock-  
ing, feebleness chasing,  
Fulfilling our foray.

Despite the absence of "a complete sentence," there is a woven unity here which assures us of a complete statement; an interpolated *are* is not necessary. The first line states the subject and has the adverb in inverted-order patterning. The second line is in apposition with the first and intensifies the inversion by adding an "object" to the adverb in the complement. The remaining twenty-three verbals modify *We two boys*. Line 3 puts a prepositional phrase and two adjectives in the adverb function. Line 5 varies the structure by adding a past participle and an adjective to the *-ing* verbals modifying *We two boys*. Line 6 adds a determiner to the "object" *law*, which also has a prepositional phrase modifying it. Line 7 uses apposition of noun "objects" to vary the formula, and the last line clinches and resolves the whole structure by using normal word order. Most significant possibly is the way Whitman achieves, after twenty-five images in the *-ing* verbals, a binding or overriding image in the final word *foray*, meaning "raid." It might be noted that *foray* is not in Dr. Johnson's or Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary. Certainly this precise use of a fairly new word is not what makes the poem an artistic success. The *-ing* verbal, with its denotation of action, seems the best of all verb forms for the purpose here intended. Whitman knew what he was doing in playing with the system of syntax, the tune, and the words, for the same kind of adroit manipulation is everywhere in *Leaves of Grass*.

The first twenty-one lines of "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" build a brilliant total image of a reminiscence in much



the same way. Walt uses prepositional phrases, apposition, *-ing* forms, and limited inversion. The fifteen line openings with prepositions become not a monotonous sameness to the eye but a consummate artistic victory when their image-making quality is seen and their tune is picked up by the ear. The first fourteen prepositions take on a far greater meaning than usually is achieved by structure words. The fifteenth preposition *as*, the signal of similitude, welds the preceding disparate images into the unifying image *flock*, which in the final line is enlarged to *reminiscence*.

When Whitman's poems are examined for the interplay of image or metaphor with syntax, much of the complaint about the catalogs disappears. This is not the place to discuss in detail the art of Whitman; it should suffice to indicate that Walt's effects are achieved primarily by syntax and not by vocabulary per se.

The test of any theory of language, it is often said, must be made in an examination of the master user of English, Shakespeare. As indicated earlier, Jespersen failed to see much more than words and morphology in Shakespeare's works. A narrow view of "technical grammar" drew a curtain across the philologist's eyes. John Crowe Ransom in an essay "On Shakespeare's Language" discusses, as one of Shakespeare's supreme "poetic strategies," the compounding of Latin elements with the common English vocabulary in Macbeth's soliloquy:

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood  
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will  
rather  
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,  
Making the green one red.

The third line is indeed memorable. But I venture to say that the polysyllabic words interested Shakespeare far less than the fact that he inverted the "object" and gave adverbial force to the *-ing* verbal. The syntax here is masterly, the vocabulary a *jeu d'esprit*. Shakespeare doubtless smiled as he wrote down the big adjective, but he patted himself on the back over the successful syntactical deployment. The very first speech of Macbeth in the play is "So foul and fair a day I have not seen"; he begins with inversion, and with inversion he speaks consistently. Also he uses a good

deal of apposition, and clauses and verbals operate in the noun-function.

As the most generally acknowledged literary masterpiece in English, *Hamlet* can be our laboratory. Here, as with Macbeth, each character uses significant syntactical structures as differentiating language traits. Horatio, who seems pretty well rattled by his awareness of the Ghost's presence, is given a fairly complex utterance in which relative clauses and post-modifying past participles play an important part in defining his mental quality. The King speaks involved, sinuous, long sentences. The syntax is marked by antithesis signaled by *yet* and *nor*, dependent clauses, inversion, word groups operating as headwords, and apposition. His words might seem to indicate no sense of guilt, for he seems poised, self-controlled, and unafraid. Yet the syntax indicates quite a different quality from that stated by the words. Here is a complex or disturbed mind, aware of its own deceit and duplicity, revealing its character through its mode of expression.

Polonius is known to us primarily as the giver of advice to Laertes; in that oft-declined speech the significant syntactical item is the imperative form of the verb. An examination of his other speeches shows that he uses this form to everyone, including the King and Queen. The old counselor is accustomed to giving orders, and Shakespeare keeps him true to his role throughout. The Ghost quite properly speaks with much inversion and with many past participles. Hamlet's speeches are marked by exclamations, command or wish clauses, parentheses, questions, and negatives: *no, not, never, nay, nor*. The sentences flow almost always in normal order. Occasionally, as in the famous soliloquy, infinitive forms play a leading syntactic role. In this same speech a clause fills the noun function: "what dreams may come . . . must give us pause." If syntax be the criterion, Hamlet is clear in mind, direct, forceful, speaking straight from the heart, an intellectual with great language skill.

If it be said that Shakespeare may have modeled his characters upon people he had met, so much the greater was Shakespeare for recognizing syntax as a distinguishing trait in a person's utterance. If it be asserted that Shakespeare invented his characters

and assigned syntax to them, how much greater was his perception of the significant differences which syntax provides an artist. A full analysis would require the examination of the way Shakespeare maneuvered syntax and metaphor to get his best effects. Suffice it to say that the glory of Shakespeare's artistry lies not in the word list in the Cambridge Edition but in the syntactical manipulation which gives tension and multi-leveled meaning to what he wrote.

Language is a system in which the number of operating items is very small; fewer than eight hundred different units can be isolated, says Edgar Mayer of the Univer-

sity of Buffalo. When we realize that these units or structures encompass a dictionary of half a million words, the comparative unimportance of vocabulary can be grasped. The system lies in the recurrence of the structures and in the tune in the spoken language. The vast word-hoard plays an important role, as does the paper running through a printing press. But the printing operation would not go forward if the paper but not the machinery existed. A language lives in its system, and it stands to reason that the system puts its shaping impress upon the literature which is a product of the system. Syntax is the inner dynamics that makes literature.

## Linguistics and Literature

GARLAND CANNON

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The growing bibliography of linguistic studies relating to literature suggests that more and more work will be done in this field in the near future. Already books like Paul Roberts's *Patterns of English* (1956) and *Understanding English* (1958) are familiar to many high-school and university teachers of English who are seeking an efficient and scientific approach to language in their classes. The feeling that linguistics might also be useful in some way to the teaching and deeper understanding of poetry and other literature seems to be widespread, though many linguists are not interested in foregoing their investigations into the "pure" aspects of language in order to consider applications of their findings, just as many non-linguists have the interest but not the special knowledge required to make such applications. It might be well, therefore, to summarize briefly the applicable studies that linguists have made thus far, and to suggest the direction and possible limitations that studies of the future might have.

As is often true for a pioneering venture, the first studies were brief, scattered, and unsystematic—qualities that lend themselves

to Everyman's assumption that he may as well get in on the ground floor and be an expert too. Since one premise of linguists is that they are scientists who are utilizing scientific methods of investigation, it follows that a basic initial step in exploring something new is the defining of exactly what it is that is being explored. Yet it was not until 1958, nine years after the appearance of the pioneering Wellek-Warren suggestion of the phonemic consideration of poetry (*Theory of Literature*, 1949, p. 179), that the first real effort toward a definition was made. This was A. A. Hill's "A Program for the Definition of Literature" (*Texas Studies in English*, XXXVII, 46-52).

The definition, of course, is of the ambiguous term *literature*, which is also used to mean advertising matter or any kind of imaginative writing, however bad. Hill rightly proposes a program based on formal characteristics of a permanent utterance that is to be tested, at once rejecting Arnold's touchstone method and all such impressionistic inquiry (impressionistic because based on the aesthetic and ethical values we derive from the writing), and

setting aside description as a following step to be undertaken once the formal definition based on formal characteristics has been reached. His conclusion is that "utterances which are not characterized by stylistic characteristics which set them off from casual utterances are not literature . . . . Those utterances which do thus differ are always examples of literature, at least considered as broadly as possible." As he points out, some inclusions will turn out to be trivial, as in his example of "Thirty days hath September, April, June, and November." The task, in other words, is to use scientific method to isolate the stylistic characteristics of a given time and community which render a permanent utterance into literature rather than casual speech.

A fascinating corollary of such a division is suggested in the work of scholars like John Carroll, both in terms of machine translation of a casual utterance and then of literature, and finally in terms of machine creation of literature. One of his programs, for example, involves the simulation of the construction of a sentence for which the lexicon and grammar of English are stored in the machine, these being acquired through scientific means. Also in storage there is "a repertoire of recognitions of stimulus objects and stimulus properties, each with appropriate verbal responses," so that when the machine is instructed to "describe the objects arrayed before you in such a way that the target machine can identify them purely on the basis of your verbal output," it stimulates a sentence that might have been spoken by an American today ("An Operational Model for Language Behavior," *Anthropological Linguistics*, I, Jan. 1959, 37-54). The sentence would be excluded from Hill's definition of literature because it is casual speech. Yet after the discrimination has been made between all such sentences and their stylistic variants that are sub-units of literature, it is possible that there might be stored in the machine all the proper equipment and subroutines to permit it to create a new *The Hairy Ape* or *The Waste Land*, or at least synthetic productions. The possibility may seem to be fantastic, and yet in theory the machine creation of literature is conceivable, once the total formal characteristics constituting all the subclasses

have been isolated, objectively described, and stored in a machine. Already there is in storage in machines at Georgetown University, M.I.T., the University of Washington, and the University of Moscow, "miniature languages" that permit experimental machine translation of a casual utterance from Russian to English, German to English, and English to Russian.

So far, linguistic studies relating to literature have posed no revolutionary theories. Harold Whitehall's "From Linguistics to Criticism" (*Kenyon Review*, XVIII Summer 1956, 411-421) might be considered the first one by a linguist. Primarily a review of Trager and Smith's *An Outline of English Structure*, it modestly proposed an application to poetry of the phonological findings recorded in the book, with a provocative suggestion in the question, "If phonemes dissolve into bundles of constituent distinctive features, why not *metremes*?" The virtue of Whitehall's proposal is evidenced by the fact that Hill and Chatman, the linguists who have done the most in analyzing particular poems, have chosen the Trager-Smith book as the source of their phonemic transcription.

His suggestion is more important, even if it is still not carried out. The basic metrical unit—if it exists it is presumably composed of allometers—remains to be described. Thus Chatman utilized a four-stress system in his suprasegmental work with Frost's "Mowing," to which John Crowe Ransom answered that poetry may involve a different stress system than that which was discovered for speech.<sup>1</sup> Hill used the same system for his poetic-structure analyses of "The Windhover" and the famous song in

<sup>1</sup>See Seymour Chatman's "Robert Frost's 'Mowing': An Inquiry into Prosodic Structure" and "Mr. Stein on Donne," *Kenyon Review*, XVIII (Summer 1956), 421-438, 443-451. Also in the same issue, Ransom's "The Strange Music of English Verse," pp. 460-477. See also Chatman's "Linguistics and Teaching Introductory Literature," *Language Learning*, VII, 3-4 (1956-1957), 3-10; and his "Linguistics, Poetics, and Interpretation: The Phonemic Dimensions," *QJS*, XLIII (Oct. 1957), 248-256. The latter article was answered by John McLaughlin, in "Linguistics and Literary Analysis," *QJS*, XLIV (Apr. 1958), 175-178.

Pippa Passes, stating, however, that the four stresses are reduced to two in poetry.<sup>2</sup> Both analyses are excellent, both in themselves and as potential models for future linguistic studies of individual poems. Yet neither these nor Chatman's article defines the basic metrical unit, although each recognizes that poetry is metered language.

What is needed is a proved general methodology for the phonological and structural analysis of literature in general, both for non-metered language as in short stories and novels, and for metered language, with submetrics for subclasses. These methodological distinctions within the total literature of a given community of a given time would be based on formal, objective differences between sets of formal characteristics, not on meaning in one subclass (as in the epic and heroic narrative) and inconsistently on form in another (as in the sonnet). Hill has outlined a program for a definition of the subclasses, through a study of those that are clearly marked by definable stylistic characteristics. Once these characteristics are exhaustively listed, they can be used for the definition of further subclasses of literature, until all have been analyzed for each community. So the needed steps seem to be three. The subclasses of the literature of the community must be defined, then described. Thereupon the larger question of a general methodology can be considered.

As Hill cautions, the few studies of selected poems thus far barely penetrate the surface, but all point to potential significant aids to a deepened understanding of the poems studied. It would be particularly worthwhile if, and when the analyses for all communities of all times can be done, an attempt can then be made to consolidate these into universal definitions and descriptions for given times. With this equipment, a non-linguist anywhere at any time could judge whether a given permanent utterance

is literature or a casual utterance, be it in the Sanskrit of Kalidasa or the Chinese of 2000 A.D., and could judge whether a given utterance is an elegy or a sonnet on the basis of its formal stylistic characteristics (assuming that these are subclasses).

Since literature presumably has its origin in language, and since language changes, differences and changes among the world's tongues may preclude universality in all (or any) subclasses of literature. Moreover, as the values will necessarily be studied in the rigorous analyses leading to descriptions, they may be found to contain a high percentage of variables from subjectivity rather than an objectively measurable composition. It is to be expected, however, that ever-finer measurements will become feasible as more is learned about stylistic characteristics. Along the way, more light should be shed on the nature of writing in relation to speech, the nature of poetry in relation to writing and speech, and the processes by which the various subclasses of literature come into being in the first place.

Specific questions will emerge, many of which may be answered. For example, does lexical meaning influence the stylistic characteristics that make an utterance a member of one subclass rather than another? Does "Thanatopsis," a philosophical poem, have less suprasegmental variety than Poe's slight "Annabel Lee," and is it therefore less valuable for phonological study? Is onomatopoeia a substantive thing, and if so, is it susceptible to quantitative-qualitative analysis? If not, what seems to produce the sound of the surf in certain lines of "Dover Beach"? Is the tragedy *Hamlet*, intended to be spoken and acted rather than written down, a better corpus for linguistic analysis than the comedy *Every Man in His Humour*? What is the effect upon the values of a Villon poem when it is read in the French of 1959, as opposed to an attempted reading by the same person in fifteenth-century French? Is it possible to make scientific evaluations within a subclass, as in the case of *In Memoriam* vs. "Thyrsis," or the *Iliad* vs. another epic of the community composed about the same time? Will future study discover a suprasegmental formula for a given community and time, which, when used, makes an utterance

<sup>2</sup>"An Analysis of 'The Windhover': An Experiment in Structural Method," *PMLA*, LXX (Dec. 1955), 968-978; and "Pippa's Song: Two Attempts at Structural Criticism," *UTSE*, XXXV (1956), 51-56. For an attempt by a non-linguist to apply the Trager-Smith system to Yeats's "After Long Silence," see Ronald Sutherland, "Structural Linguistics and English Prosody," *CE*, XX (Oct. 1958), 12-17.

"prose" rather than poetry, so that one can automatically know, for example, that *Leaves of Grass* is poetry and *Moby-Dick* is not?

Some specific questions must inevitably remain unanswered, partly because of intrinsic limitations involved when linguistic method is applied to literature. The studies thus far point to at least four limitations which seem to obtain for all such studies of literature of any community at any time. The first, a really crucial one, is that every new reading of a work is unique from all previous readings, and therefore the linguistic analysis based on each new reading must vary from all previous analyses. Because of the infinite oral variations possible for even the shortest poem, let alone for a poly-acted long drama, an oral interpreter will never be able to duplicate precisely his own performance. Somewhere he will make slight, unconscious alterations, with perhaps an original soft stress becoming a tertiary, a secondary becoming a primary, or a (2 3 3 ||) becoming a {2 3 2 ||}. The alteration may be larger, with a single-bar juncture becoming lengthened to a double-bar, or a double-bar to a double-cross, or plus juncture becoming a single-bar, in which case an original phonemic clause is broken into two clauses, with all the attendant shifts in the whole suprasegmental pattern. Two monosyllabic morphemes separated by a plus juncture may become allologic and conceivably structurally ambiguous, as in the Spanish *a Dios* which may be merged into the very different *adios*.

It is true that, for a skilled performer, many of the variations from his previous reading will be trivial, and probably neither reading will materially affect the values. Yet oral interpretation is an art, not a science, for there is no reliable current way through which an author can inform the reader exactly how his work is to be performed.<sup>6</sup> Punctuation is at best a poor means of indicating intonation patterns desired by the author, and yet it influences each performer. More significant, however, is the fact that a performance is heavily dependent upon the reader's combined lin-

guistic, stylistic, and lexical interpretation of the work at that moment, an interpretation that may be altered at the next reading. The written form of literature invites these larger variations, similar to the way that a Hindemith score invites excellent performances but sometimes receives poor ones.

A poem cannot complain, but an audience may react very differently to the degrees and varieties of expressiveness which several oral readings of one poem provide. The average person, including most linguists, will give a less expressive performance of a given poem than will an oral interpreter. Therefore, even though the linguist makes a faultless phonemic transcription of his reading and even though he makes a faultless analysis based on this transcription, he is deducting from the original values of the poem, in spite of the fact that the experience may deepen his own insight into it. Technically, he should furnish his audience with a written record of his phonemic transcription, and have available for them a recording of his reading. Otherwise, his conclusions should be considered subject to doubt, in spite of their scientific accuracy.

The second limitation is that there seems to be no one authoritative reading (or reader) of a given utterance once it has become permanent. All possibilities must be discounted: the author immediately after he has finished composing the work, the author after he has had time to reflect deeply upon it, an oral interpreter, a professional teacher of literature, a linguist who is only a mediocre reader but who has a keen knowledge of the phonology of his language, and all other persons. Of course, degrees of reliability exist, in that if a linguist could secure a recording of a poet reading his work only moments after he had finished composing it, the phonemic transcription of the recording would presumably be a more desirable corpus for analysis than would a transcription of the linguist's reading of the poem. However, the analysis still might be valuable to a teacher only as an example, since it is likely that the teacher would not have the original recording to play in class and so must do his own, spontaneous reading.

The third limitation is that the modern

<sup>6</sup>H. A. Gleason, *An Introduction to Descriptive Linguistics* (1955), p. 44.



reading of non-modern literature or of modern versions of this literature may alter or even reduce the original values. To make a reliable phonological study of a British poem written prior to the Great Vowel Shift, the linguist should first know the precise allophone for each of the segmental phonemes (as imperfectly represented by the graphemes) of the poem. The task would be further complicated if the poem were a little-known one composed during the transitional period between Chaucer and Shakespeare, especially for lines where a metrical reading would not show whether the shift had yet taken place. If there is characters' dialogue in the lines, instances when a reader of the Middle Ages would have been most likely to use rapid speech, the needed allologic forms would hardly be captured in the phonemic transcription of the performance of a modern reader, who has little or no knowledge of such speech phenomena of the time.

Mistakes in the segmental transcription would be of less moment than those in the suprasegmental area. Almost nothing is known for certain about the suprasegmental qualities of speech of the Middle Ages or even of these qualities in British and American speech up to the twentieth century. Yet an analysis of the suprasegmentals is the linguistic one likely to produce the most beneficial results—e.g., to help discover the extent and kinds of environments of the stylistic variants that help make one utterance better than its contemporary of the same subclass, and that help make it something more than casual speech. An enlightened guess about the suprasegmentals of earlier literature is still a guess. Therein may lie the same subjectivity and so possible errors of which some modern literary critics are accused. For that reason, it would seem that linguistic analysis, both phonological and structural, should not be made of non-modern poetry except with the most cautious qualifications. Certainly a transcription of a modern reading of the Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* cannot lead to really dependable conclusions about Chaucer's unusual (or conventional) patterning of sound segments as compared to those of a casual utterance of the time, or about his skill in the manipulation and variation of suprasegmental patterns.

The fourth limitation is that there should not be significant dialectal differences between the speech of the author of an utterance and that of the person who performs it. Though the condition of a modern reading of a modern poem is met, the transcription is not necessarily reliable. For instance, a French-speaking Canadian reading a poem by a native, continuing resident of Paris can be predicted to have segmental differences from the speech of the poet. When the differences affect the linguistic and/or lexical meaning of a poem, serious problems of misinterpretation may arise. They may affect the aesthetic and ethical values in ways not yet visualized. Suprasegmental differences can be expected too. Thus an intended British {3 2 2 ||} that is read as {2 3 3 ||} or {2 3 1 #} by an American may alter a crucial meaning.

So Hill's analyses of the poetic structures of "The Windhover" and the *Pippa Passes* song may have suffered somewhat. His experience in the first led him to improve his method in the second, for in "The Windhover" analysis he seemed to be assuming an omnipotent or at least unchallenged American reading of a British poem, whereas in the second analysis he pointed out that his reading had been verified by a colleague to be a reasonable one. Chatman, who was not essentially working on poetic structure, avoided these dangers by using a modern American poet (rather than Victorian British), by tape-recording eight American readings of Frost's poem (including that by Frost himself), and then by including the suprasegmental transcriptions of all eight in his article. None of the readings was his.

Despite the four limitations, a worthy future seems to await the application of linguistic principles and methods to modern literature. It is conceivable that changes in present approaches to oral interpretation and the teaching of literature may result, changes which cannot now be imagined because linguists have barely initiated their study. Instead, the time may come when a course in linguistics and literature will be standard in university curriculums. One change is vital right now: every teacher of literature who does not already have a sound knowledge of the phonological system of his native language should gain it



as soon as possible. Fortunately, American phonology has been extensively studied, so that teachers can easily obtain this knowledge at a summer linguistics institute or even at their own college or university.

As Ransom has aptly said (see footnote 1), "I have the hope that there may be many discussions between the prosodists and the linguists; most of them should be private, and face to face. The prosodists are likely to know better what the poets intend. But the linguists are abler at show-

ing objectively how the readers register the effect; and they will be abler at attaining experimentally, if they wish, to 'standards' for reading the various genres of poetry which will be better than such practices as are current. Between them, the prosodists and the linguists might cast a good deal of illumination upon a twilight region where we and the general public cannot see very clearly though our feelings are still powerfully engaged."

## Comparing Traditional and Structural Grammar

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In the last few decades, a significant change has developed in the attitudes of people interested in the study of language. This change results from a different way of looking at language—the structural way. In this paper, I should like to discuss what a comparison of traditional and structural grammar<sup>1</sup> reveals about their respective adequacies, specifically as each is applied to a description of English. I may say, at the outset, that in my opinion the traditional grammar often fails to satisfactorily explain the linguistic facts, whereas structural grammar does not fail in this way—precisely because it deals with them.

The differences between the traditional and the structural approaches to grammar

are manifold. I think, however, that their fundamental difference emerges from the following statement—that structuralists, unlike traditionalists, are interested in making only what have been called "vulnerable" statements about grammar. It is primarily in this respect that structural linguistics has a right to being called a science. By "vulnerable" statements is meant simply statements whose claim to being true can be either verified or disproved. In order that statements may have this property of vulnerability, their terms and predicates must be open to everyone's inspection. This is a way of saying that structural statements are made only about observable, formal features of a language.

Traditional grammar does not so restrict itself. Its departures from the above principle may be grouped under several heads—what might be called fallacies. There is first the semantic fallacy. This is exhibited in statements like "A noun is the name of a person, place, or thing," or "An interrogative sentence is one that asks a question." Such statements are unsatisfactory for several reasons. In the first place, items like *fire*, *happiness*, *charity* may be adduced

<sup>1</sup>The term "grammar" has several senses; it can mean, among other things, the actual linguistic material which is under observation, or it can mean the body of statements made about the linguistic material. Cf. W. Nelson Francis, *The Structure of American English*, with a separate chapter on American dialects by Raven I. McDavid, Jr. (1958), pp. 222 ff. Here I use it in the latter sense, as referring to the respective ways in which traditional and structural grammarians describe the English language.

forcing us to enlarge the definition of a noun so as to include notions like "process or activity," "state," "abstraction," and so on. This enlarging procedure can be further forced by adducing additional forms, to the point where the definition becomes so particular that it is no longer a general statement but merely a list. It would seem that when semantic statements have the generality that would justify making them as statements they must be inadequate, whereas if statements of such a type are made adequate, they are no longer general.

This lack of fit between grammatical statements couched in semantic terms and the linguistic facts that they presume to cover is not surprising, if we agree that the grammar of a language consists entirely of linguistic forms and their arrangements. Semantic statements are statements made about the relation between language and the world about us (including ourselves). This relation—what we generally call meaning—is certainly of great interest to us but, unfortunately, we cannot control the objects and events of the world in a manner that would be rigorous enough for their use in grammatical analysis.

This lack of control is essentially what we have in mind when we speak of the indeterminacy of meaning, and it points to another difficulty inherent in semantic statements. That is, it is impossible to be certain that what I mean by "person," "place," or "thing" is the same as what someone else means by these terms. Linguistic forms like *him*, *there*, *it* might thus qualify for me as nouns and not for someone else, and conversely. It is in this sense that semantic statements are not vulnerable. No satisfactory means can be devised to ascertain their truth or falsity.

The definition given above for an interrogative sentence is likewise fallacious. It presupposes the knowledge of what a question is. All semantic definitions or explanations have this circular property. They may serve as rough-and-ready aids, but they have no claim to being precise or, in fact, actually explaining anything. The same objection holds for the customary explanations of restrictive and non-restrictive clauses, of dependent and independent constructions, and so forth.

We may speak next of the logical fallacy.

Under this head are comprehended all such statements about grammar as are made on the supposition that laws of logic govern the universe—with the corollary that language perfectly mirrors that universe. This fallacy, which is at least as old as Plato, looks for order in language corresponding to the putative order in the universe. If we say that English has three primary grammatical tenses, on the basis of the way we cut up the time continuum, we are committing this fallacy. English certainly expresses past, present, and future time, as well as various aspects of these times, but the manner by which future time is expressed in English is not the same, grammatically, as the manner by which past and present time are expressed. We might just as well say that English has the dual number category, since we can say "I saw both of them."

If we say that the word *man* has masculine gender in English because it refers to a male being, we are committing this fallacy. The structuralist would say that *man* has masculine gender in English because it elicits *he* as its personal pronoun. We should notice that, although we can say also of *he* that it is masculine on logical grounds, we can say further that it belongs to a class of words which has a three-way formal division of a kind that the nominal class does not display.

Fallacious also are statements to the effect that double negatives are incorrect because two negatives make a positive; that sentences may not begin with *and* or *or* since these words logically indicate the conjunction and disjunction of sentences. This approach disallows, also on logical grounds, expressions like *rounder*, *more perfect*, *none are*, and so forth. I am not suggesting that all these illustrations of the logical fallacy lead to unacceptable conclusions. I am merely suggesting that the criterion used in judging these grammatical questions is inappropriate.

There is then the normative fallacy. Grammarians proceeding under this fallacy believe that it is possible and necessary to set up prescriptive norms for usage. Such grammarians purport to advance a model of correctness. If asked where the model comes from, they appeal to some earlier authority. Such appeals, if resolutely main-

tained, are of course invulnerable. The attempt to set up such norms is not of itself reprehensible, however. Under certain circumstances, primarily those embodied in the teaching situation, it is absolutely necessary to teach norms. To my mind, nothing is further from the truth than the common belief that orientation toward usage leads to grammatical anarchy. It is not at all necessary to condone all usage. In fact, teachers of English would be derelict to do so. But it is necessary to study usage in order to know what norms to prescribe. The fallacy of the prescriptivists consists in deriving their norms from sources, chiefly derivative handbooks, which often display little or no recognition of the actual state of the language for which they are making prescriptions. The perennial questions of *shall/will*, of ending sentences with prepositions, of the split infinitive, can all be resolved by observing how qualified users of the language actually handle these matters. I am not suggesting that this would be easy to accomplish. "Qualified users" must be defined, and their different functional varieties must be distinguished. But I think that only in this way—by a careful examination of what the linguistic facts are, not what we hope or imagine them to be—can we teach norms that will be at all realistic.

It would be possible to extend the discussion of these three fallacies; it would also be possible to add others, such as the fallacy represented by discussing the grammar of English on the basis of preconceptions derived from the grammar of another language (say Latin), or the fallacy represented by the misuse of historical considerations in discussing present-day English grammar, or the fallacy represented by extreme purism. I think, however, that what has already been said presents the major deficiencies of the traditional approach to grammar.

It is not part of my intention here to dwell on the considerable virtues of traditional grammar. One thing should be mentioned, however. It would be a mistake to think that traditional grammarians paid no attention to formal features.<sup>3</sup> The expansion of the definition of a noun, mentioned earlier, so as to comprehend words like *fire*, *happiness*, *charity*, etc., is due to their

recognition of the role that formal features play in grammar. That is, the traditionalists recognize certain features as being common to names of persons, places, and things and to words like *fire*, *happiness*, and *charity*. These are formal features. *Fire*, *happiness*, and *charity* occur as plurals, just as do the names of persons, places, and things; they co-occur in a restricted way with articles and possessive pronouns as do the names of persons, places, and things; they may occur in the possessive case; and so on. In short, the traditionalist is something of a structuralist himself.

The difference between the two, however, is more than one of mere degree. The structuralist has made a *total* commitment. He believes and proceeds on the assumption that the grammar of a language consists of the linguistic facts of that language and nothing else. This commitment entails a certain cost. Large areas that are customarily regarded as parts of the grammarian's domain are excluded or curtailed. Thus, considerations of meaning are restricted. It is incorrect, however, to think that structuralists are not interested in meaning. They are very much interested in it. It is only that they feel more or less unable to make statements about meaning, as that term is generally understood, of a kind that would satisfy them. They thus resort to things like "differential meaning" and "distributional meaning," not because they think that these types of meaning are more significant than what we may call "semantic meaning," but simply because their wish to make none but verifiable statements makes meaning of only the former types admissible.

Likewise in questions of correctness. These questions involve value judgments which the linguist, as structuralist, does not reckon himself qualified to make. This is not to say that he may not make them. Very few people are exclusively structuralists. They teach, for example. In this latter

<sup>3</sup>One of the reasons for the continuing appeal and importance of men like Jespersen and Sweet, in addition to the fact that they were extremely learned and brilliant, is that they so clearly perceived the importance of formal features. One other virtue may be mentioned: the completeness of their coverage, particularly in the field of syntax.

capacity, a structuralist may make decisions as to correctness but, while such decisions are made, in his case, on the basis of structural analysis, they are not in themselves structural statements. As structuralist he is also not interested in questions of rhetoric, philology, or style, although in his capacity as teacher, scholar, or writer he very well may be.

Such stringent delimitation of the structuralist's area of interest would seem misguided or perverse if there were not compensations. I think, however, that there are. By focusing exclusively on the structure of the language, the structuralist has discovered more and more of the features that play significant roles in the function of the language, namely those features that signal meaning differences, these being the most important features in any language. The fact that *pit* and *bit* mean two different things in English causes the structuralist to look for the formal correlates of this meaning difference. He thus analyzes two bilabial plosive sounds, voiceless and voiced respectively, which have the potential function of distinguishing, by themselves, a meaning contrast in English. Such sounds are phonemic in status. The meaning differences between *differ* and *defér*, *gréen hóuse* and *gréenhóuse* cause him to analyze different stresses as being phonemic in status. Comparable examples could be adduced which have led to the analysis of pitch and pause features as phonemic.

In all these operations we have not said what the words in question mean. We have asked only whether the pairs tested mean the same or different things. Meaning is thus used only as a kind of litmus paper check.<sup>3</sup> If a meaning difference exists between two forms, then the structuralist looks for the structural correlates of that difference.

Of course, the structuralist proceeds on the assumption that all meaning differences produced in the language will have structural correlates. This may or may not be true in fact.<sup>4</sup> I believe, however, that the structuralist must proceed as if his assumption were, in fact, true.

The history of comparative linguistics provides us with an interesting analogue to this assumption of the structuralists. Among some German comparativists of the late

nineteenth century, the so-called *Junggrammatiker*, there developed the notion that sound-laws admit of no exception; i.e., if a sound-change took place which shifted the quality of a vowel sound or a consonant sound, that shift took place wherever the vowel or consonant in question occurred. Some notion of regularity in sound-change was inescapable when one examined correspondences between related languages or between two stages of the same language. Bitter differences of opinion developed in the 1870's and 1880's, however, between those scholars who believed that sound-laws admitted of no exceptions and those scholars who, agreeing that there was some degree of consistency between correspondences, would not agree that the operation of sound-laws worked according to inexorable laws. These latter scholars saw too many apparent exceptions to the regularity of sound-change. Seeing these exceptions, they argued that the law of regular sound-change must be abandoned.

The *Junggrammatiker*, however, on seeing the apparent exceptions, felt only that the statements regarding the conditions under which a sound-change took place might have to be modified. The interesting thing is that by adhering to the principle, they were able to reveal more and more of the structure of languages. A classic instance vindicating this approach is the so-called Verner's Law. Faced with the fact that the correspondences between Indo-European and Germanic consonants described by Rask and Grimm held in most cases but not in all, some scholars maintained that this fact invalidated the notion of regularity in sound-change. Verner, however, proceeding on the assumption that sound-laws admit of no exception, was able

<sup>3</sup>This figure is used by Francis, *Structure of American English*, p. 229.

<sup>4</sup>Idiomatic meanings, such as that of "He went west," compared with the non-idiomatic meaning of the same expression, pose a problem here. Some of the meanings obtained from a reading of poetry might also be offered by way of contradicting our assertion. There is no denying that these questions, and others like them, represent troublesome problems, nor is it possible to predict whether such problems will eventually yield to more refined linguistic techniques.

to find the structural conditions under which the variants subsumed by his law occurred. Grimm's Law was thus preserved, with an amendment. That is the typical procedure: when "aberrant" forms occur, they can be comprehended under the sound-law if the particular environments in which they occur are consistently different from the environments in which the change is regular. In this sense, all such changes are regular.

The question of whether sound-laws do or do not admit of exceptions is still a live one. It seems to me, however, that rigorous work in comparative and historical linguistics can only be carried out on the assumption that they do not. The alternative is to admit all kinds of unsystematic, ad hoc explanations of what takes place in the historical development of languages. By the same token I believe that we must commit ourselves to the proposition that the mechanism whereby a language works may be explained entirely in terms of its structural elements. This structural approach has already led to the discovery of the phoneme as the minimal linguistic unit capable of signaling differences in meaning, of the morpheme as the minimal linguistic unit having meaning, of the role that features of stress, pitch, and pause play in communication, and many more things. It has by no means discovered all that structure has to yield, nor has it succeeded in describing precisely all of the features that it has discovered, but I believe that significant further progress in understanding grammar can only come along structural lines.

I would like now to sketch one or two procedures of structural grammar and suggest the ways in which these are superior to the procedures of the traditional grammarians. Let us consider the noun as a part of speech. We will assume that we don't know what a noun is, but we know what a word is. We find, in analyzing the structure of English, that a certain group of words behave in a markedly consistent way. By "behave" here, I am referring to the way in which these words combine and concatenate with other linguistic forms, or to those features that we generally have in mind when we speak of morphology and syntax. That is, of all the structural en-

vironments in which a word may find itself in English, this group is found always in only a limited portion of those environments. We find that this group of words may occur with the plural suffix and with the possessive suffix; we find that they co-occur in a restricted way with articles and with possessive pronouns; we find that they pattern with prepositions, occur in certain relations to verbs; and so on. We observe further that only these certain words, from among the total number in English, enjoy precisely these privileges of grammatical domain. We decide that we have here a class of English words, defined as belonging to this class because they have similarities in common which are not shared by any other English words.

It will be noticed that we have used terms like "preposition," "article," "verb," in the analysis of this English word class, and there may be a question as to where these terms came from. Using these terms is merely a short-hand way of discussing the procedure; we could simply make lists of the environing forms and use those lists in describing the patterning habits of the word class we are diagnosing, but since we know something of the structure of English before we begin analysis, such a short-cut, carefully followed, will not lead us astray. When we have isolated this particular class of English words, there is no reason why we should not call them nouns. What we call them is unimportant; the important thing is the way we have defined them. We have defined them in a way that makes it possible for anyone knowing the definition to determine whether any given word in English is a noun or not. Perhaps this last claim is too strong on the basis only of the sketchy way in which the procedure has been described, but if the analysis is exact enough, the claim is valid.

The fact that we can call this class of words nouns without causing too much confusion is interesting. It suggests that there is not too great a difference between the results of traditional and structural analysis. This is, in fact, the case. The rival analyses coincide over, at a guess, 95 percent of the linguistic facts. Our problems, however, are precisely in this marginal area, and now in this marginal area we will not need to attempt determinations on the



basis of finer and finer semantic distinctions; we will have our objective criteria ready to hand.

Another illustration of the different procedures and results of traditional and structural grammar may be seen in comparing their respective definitions of the interrogative sentence. The traditional definition, as I have tried to show, is clearly inadequate. We instead try to find out what are the structural features that correlate with a particular type of response—one that we customarily associate with questions.<sup>5</sup> This response is usually the giving of information by reply. We find that these structural features are essentially of three types: when words like *who*, *what*, *where*, *why*, and *how* begin certain sentences; when a particular collocation of verb and subject occur; and when, in the absence or presence of either of these other two features, a particular pitch contour is on the sentence. That is, these three types of grammatical arrangement signal questions in English: "Who are you?" "Are you coming?" and "You're coming?" It will come as no surprise to anyone to learn that these three utterances are questions in English, but

again it should be noted that our definition of these three utterances as question sentences depends on nothing but observable, hence verifiable, linguistic facts.

Further examples of the foregoing type could be added. What they will all have in common, if they are based on structural facts, is that their statements of definition or explanation will be expressed in terms that anyone can test for himself. It is this fact which essentially constitutes the great superiority of structural over traditional grammar.

"It may be objected here that "questions" are what we are trying to define and that, therefore, we are not entitled to use the notion in our definition. This again is merely a short-cut; we could avoid this circularity by listing the types of responses, and say that the unlabeled linguistic forms (described in what follows) correlate with the types of behavior contained in the list. On noticing the consistent and restricted correspondence between the forms and the responses, however, there is no reason why we cannot then call the linguistic forms question or interrogative sentences. "Question" is then not part of the definition, but merely a classificatory index.

## English Grammar in the 1960's

RALPH B. LONG

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The long neglect of English grammar in the United States has been coming to an end in the 1950's. Increasing interest in the teaching of English as a second language has led to increasing attention to English grammar. It is not accident that for a century the best grammars of English have been the work of teachers of English as a second language such as Poutsma and Palmer. Teachers of other languages in the United States have also done important work in English grammar during the 1950's. Bolinger's monograph on the question in English is a major piece of work done by a professor of Spanish.<sup>1</sup> Finally, the work

of the general linguists has brought a new group of scholars into the field of English grammar. A considerable amount of English grammar is now taught in courses in general linguistics. In such courses English is the one language students and teachers alike can really deal with, and the bits from unknown tongues never seem quite real. Thus though in the Introduction to Hockett's *Course in Modern Linguistics* (1958) we are told that the linguist's range of study is every language about which infor-

<sup>1</sup>Dwight L. Bolinger, *Interrogative Structures of American English*, Publication 28 of the American Dialect Society (1957).



mation is obtainable, we are also told that "insofar as possible" throughout the book examples are taken from English; and most of the book is about English. Rejecting the interlingual "Latin" grammar from which traditionalist English grammar derives, general linguists hope to work out a defensible English grammar based on a newer interlingual model the classic description of which is found in Bloomfield's *Language* (1933). One general linguist, Harris, whose *Methods in Structural Linguistics* (1951) is a basic work in its field, has made important contributions to our understanding of the grammar of English during the 1950's. The vacuum left by English-department neglect of English grammar is thus being filled.

Two important Bloomfieldian grammars of English have appeared in the 1950's: the Fries *Structure of English* (1952) and the Hill *Introduction to Linguistic Structures* (1958), the latter largely an expansion of the Trager and Smith *Outline of English Structure* (1951). Several textbooks employing the Fries analysis have appeared. Fries insists that his work is distinct from the grammar of the schools in fundamental procedure: the traditional grammar, he says, is "like the Ptolemaic astronomy, falsely oriented" (p. 277). Actually the Fries grammar is revolutionary largely in terminology and spirit. The shapeless category of "function words" to which Fries assigns exceptional syntactic effectiveness and exceptional lexical ineffectiveness is neither new nor defensible: Bloomfield himself warned that "we have no gauge by which we could mark some formal features of a language as semantically weak or superfluous" (p. 387). Hill's work represents a more decisive break with tradition. To an unprecedented extent Hill's grammar is based in careful phonological analysis, and it excludes meaning from analysis with notable rigor. The terminology is also farther from that of the schools than is Fries's.

As the 1950's come to an end, it seems clear that what lies ahead for English grammar is not revolution but revision. Samuel Butler once remarked that it is a mercy of God that every generation does its work badly enough to leave something for the next to do. In a period in which many as-

pects of human life and thought require drastic reformulation, English grammar seems to require less sweeping revision and very little new terminology—and indeed can eliminate more terms than it needs to add. The grammar of the schools does require two generations' worth of revision. In the revision from which the grammar of the 1960's emerges, most can be learned from the work of such Europeans of the last generation as Palmer and Poutsma and from that of such Americans of this generation as Harris and Bolinger.

## I

The grammar of the 1960's should be entirely analytic and systematic in organization and presentation. The structure of standard American English should be described simply, bit by bit, beginning in the early grades. When it is taught to children whose spoken English is nonstandard, it should be taught without any hint of righteousness. There should be no frontal attacks on the speech of homes and communities. Writing is a deliberate activity in which the grammatical patternings shared with speech are followed more scrupulously. Correction of nonstandard English can be achieved through composition—and through reading—quietly and gradually as vocabulary is acquired, with grammar used as a lever and not as a bludgeon. In the teaching of grammar the focus should never be on errors that are made or that might be made. It is important too that the analysis taught should grant informal standard English full equality with general standard English and should assign formal standard English the minor place it deserves. The pathetic elegancies of schoolma'am English must be given up. For any but quite formal use, it is hardly possible to revive *whom* and the *shall* of simple prediction, or to replace *can* with *may* where permission is asked or given, or to drive *was* out of wishes and rejected conditions. Good English is flexible, not rigid; and it is informal in style much more often than it is formal.

## II

The grammar of the 1960's should begin with analysis of the structure of clauses and of clause equivalents. Clauses are built

around minimally complete sequences of the kind that, following Harris, we can call kernels.<sup>2</sup> Kernels in which the first freely separable component is everyone's commonest name for himself, the pronoun *I*, make a good starting point: *I am honest. I am Jack. I am here. I raise ducks. I like cats.* In these sentences we can call *I* subject, *am*, *raise*, and *like* predicators, and *honest*, *Jack*, *here*, *ducks*, and *cats* complements. Some minimally complete sequences have two complements: *I make George sad. I call him Butch. I put work off.* Some have no complements: *I work. I stutter.* We can define subjects as first components in minimally complete sequences used in expressions of fact or opinion formulated in the most ordinary way. We can define predicators as second components, and complements as third—and sometimes fourth and, rarely, even fifth as well. We can classify all other components of clausal sentences as adjuncts. Thus in *but I rarely put work off long, George*, the words *long*, *rarely*, *but*, and *George* can be called adjuncts attached to the kernel. The ultimate basis of our analysis is, to employ another of Harris's terms, cooccurrence; and the occurrence of adjuncts with kernels is lacking in the compulsory quality which marks the cooccurrence of subjects, predicators, and complements, stated or (as in *stop!* and in *George lazy?*) implied. We can regard predicators as heads for their clauses, modified by subjects and complements within kernels and by adjuncts syntactically outside them. Adjuncts can also modify what we call isolates, in clause equivalents such as *yes, George*—though rarely such isolates as *ouch* or the *danger* of signs.

Our major syntactic functions, then, are those of subject, predicator, complement, adjunct, and isolate. These functions are performed by freely separable units granted distinctive spacing, or "words," by the language. They can also be performed by

multiword units. Analysis of such multiword units requires recognition of the contained syntactic functions of head and modifier, principal and appositive, preposition and subject, and coordinate. Thus in *my friend George and I have put hard work to one side too often* we have (1) the headed units *my friend*, and *I*, have *put*, *hard work*, *one side*, and *too often*, (2) the apposed unit *my friend George*, (3) the prepositional unit *to one side*, and (4) the multiple unit *my friend George and I*. Some components have secondary relationships that cannot be ignored. Thus in *we ate the chicken cold* the word *cold* is an adjunct but is also related to the complement *the chicken*.

Other clause patterns can be regarded as transforms, to use a third term of Harris's, of the statement pattern. Any word or multiword unit that distinguishes its clause from a statement we can call a clause marker, viewing the function of clause marker as a secondary one performed by words and multiword units that also perform other syntactic functions. Thus the *who* of *who said that?* is a subject like the *someone* of *someone said that*, but is also a clause marker; and the *if* of *if Jack's wrong he'll admit it* is an adjunct within its clause like the *perhaps* of *perhaps Jack's wrong*, but is also a clause marker.

Part-of-speech categories can be set up on the basis of syntactic functions characteristically performed and types of modifiers characteristically accepted. Such inflections as occur can be noted. Except in the verbs inflection is of far less importance than the prominence Trager and Smith and Hill give it suggests. Such sentences as *me and him was friends* cannot be called standard; but they occur, their structure is clear, and they are in fact the kind of thing the language has long tended toward, as in the historical displacement of *ye* by *you* and of *rid* by *rode*. *Who* is subject in *who's being waited on?* and object of a preposition in *who's she waiting on?* It is strange syntax for Hill (p. 120) to refuse subject status to the *what* of *what popped?* and instead to classify the word as a "subjectival," along with the *in* the *window* of *in the window is a candle*, simply because *what* is uninflectible. Our part-of-speech categories, like our syntactic

<sup>2</sup>Zellig S. Harris, "Cooccurrence and Transformation in Linguistic Structure," *Language*, XXXIII (1957), 283-340. In this paper I employ three terms for which I am indebted to this very important article: *kernel*, *cooccurrence*, and *transform*. For more than a decade I have used *nucleus* and *conversion* as Harris uses *kernel* and *transform*, but Harris's terms seem preferable.

functions, can be few, clearly defined, and inclusive. We will need no fringe categories—"adjectivals" alongside adjectives, for example—just as we will need no fringe categories such as "subjectival" among our syntactic functions.

### III

The grammar of the 1960's should accept the word as the smallest unit in syntactic analysis, and it should accept written-language practice in deciding what are words and what are not. Words, let us say, are freely separable units which in standard written-language representations can be preceded and followed by single spaces. Thus *of* is a word in *the father of the boy down the hall* but *s* is not a word in informal *the boy down the hall's father*. The shoe pinches here. It pinches also where there is or may be compounding or merging, as in *highway*, *afternoon*, *New Yorker*, *I'm*, *another*, and *hard up*. *Highway* and *afternoon* are written-language compounds; that is, each is two words written as a single word. *New Yorker* is a written-language phrase in which the formative *er* is a kind of head for two words—a *New Yorker* is an "er" from *New York*—but is attached to the nearer. *I'm* and *another* are syntactically ununified mergings. *Hard up* is a written-language phrase the contribution of whose parts to meaning and syntax is not clearly felt. Obviously words are sometimes troublesome units. Let us grant that, as Cherry phrases it, our words are "arbitrary quantal units"; all our units are arbitrary—including our phonemes, as Cherry points out—and the word has the advantage of exceptionally general acceptance.<sup>3</sup>

It is doubtful that the English grammar of the 1960's should employ the concept of the morpheme. The word is troublesome, but the morpheme is infinitely more troublesome. Those who employ it in their analyses identify it in oddly different ways. Thus Hockett, who insists that morphemes, not words, are "the elementary building-blocks of language in its grammatical aspect," defines them as the smallest forms recurring "with approximately the same

meaning." He decides that the formatives *ly*, *y*, and *ish* are different morphemes because such paired words as *homely* and *homey* and *manly* and *mannish* differ in meanings. *Bear*, he says, is "presumably" the same morpheme in *women bear children* and *I can't bear the pain*. He is uncertain whether to divide such words as *remote*, *promote*, *reduce*, and *produce*, where relations of the parts to meaning are "tenuous." He says that where morphemic analysis is difficult "an obvious practical step is to set the morphemic problem aside" (pp. 133-134, 148, 172-173). Hill attempts to cut the morpheme off from meaning. Thus for phonological reasons he divides the noun *potato* into the two morphemes *po* and *tato* exactly as historical analysis would divide *pertain* into *per* and *tain*, and he divides *svelte* into *s* and *velte*. Apparently he would divide *thermometer* into *ther* and *mometer*; in patterns of stress and juncture *thermometer* is like *the monitor*. The pronoun form *we* Hill divides into three morphemes: an inflectional prefix of person and number phonemically /w/, a base morpheme /i/, and an inflectional suffix of case /y/. He describes the *wen* of *went* as an allomorph of *go* in spite of the fact that in its internal form as in its history *went* belongs with *wend* and the relation of *went* to *go* is wholly syntactic; yet his procedure will not let him describe the merged *re* of *you're late* as an allomorph of the unmerged *are* of *yes, you are* (pp. 120, 149, 159, 202). Actually Hill does very little with word formation proper, and especially with the structure of such complexes as *thermometer*, *democracy*, *segregation*, *deliberate*, *immense*, and *photographer*. Like Trager and Smith, he deals primarily with "morphemes" of stress, pitch, and punctuation—flimsy bridges across the deep river separating phonology and grammar—and with inflectional morphemes.

It seems clear that, as Hockett suggests, grammar had better "set the morphemic problem aside." Phonological division of such words as *po-tato*, *ther-mom-eter*, and *te-le-graphy* yields units of no value to grammar. As for the smallest units conveying meaning, within many words we have no idea what these are. At the beginning of the 1950's Bolinger pointed out the difficulties morphemic analysis faces where

<sup>3</sup>Colin Cherry, *On Human Communication* (1957), p. 79.

such things as rhyme make themselves felt: for example, in such a group of words as *bash, dash, gash, lash, splash, clash, and mash*.<sup>4</sup> The effectiveness of such a slogan as *think or twim* is significant. A syntax based in a fully worked out morphemics would be unbelievably complex and is not possible for the 1960's. In their famous model analyses, Trager and Smith themselves do not divide *Pennsylvania* or *island*, though morphemic division of *Pennsylvania* is not unusually difficult and *island* is to *highland* and *mainland* as *cranberry* is to *blackberry* (pp. 68-71, 74-75).

We can most conveniently begin syntactic analysis with the larger divisions of sentences (subjects, predicators, etc.) and continue it through successively smaller divisions until we reach written-language words. We should remember Bloomfield's remark that for the purposes of everyday life the word is the smallest unit of speech (p. 178). The grammar of the schools should begin as close as possible to the purposes of every-day life. Morphological analysis should follow syntactic analysis, not precede it. Analysis of such words as *svelte, trigonometry, segregation, remote, bash, and island* is highly sophisticated; current linguistic dogma notwithstanding, historical fact cannot be ignored here.

## IV

The grammar of the 1960's should be related to meaning somewhat as phonemics is related to phonetics. The first business of grammar should be to describe syntactic patternings. Different syntactic patterns can frequently express essentially the same meanings. Thus we can say *I put the job off* or *I postponed the job*. *Put* has two complements here, as in *I put the job to one side*; *postponed* has a single complement. We can say *people of that kind* or, turning the construction upside down, *that kind of people*. We can say *please close the door*, or *I'd appreciate your closing the door*, or *would you mind closing the door?* In syntactic patterning the first of these three sentences is an imperative, the second a statement, the third a question. When syntactic patternings have been described,

analysis of meaning relationships is desirable but is often difficult. Thus the subject *people* can be described as "actor" in *people always spread bad news*, but the subject *Bill's grades* in *Bill's grades are going down*, or the subject *we* in *we'll have wonderful weather in another month*, must be described only as "involved."

Context or situation, or plain common sense, often furnishes the key to construction. We know that in *Jack's hobby is buying antiques* the complement is *buying antiques*, whereas in *Jack's sister is buying antiques* it is simply *antiques*, because we know something about hobbies and sisters. The wife who, watching a nightclub entertainer, said to her husband *who do you suppose made her dress?* and got the answer *probably the police* was a victim of a combination of syntactic ambiguity and difference in interests. When *she didn't marry him because she loved him* occurs in a situation in which the marriage has not taken place, the adjunct *because she loved him* modifies the rest of the sentence. When *she didn't marry him because she loved him* occurs in a situation in which the marriage has taken place, the adjunct *not* modifies the rest of the sentence. It is impossible to deal adequately with matters such as these and ignore meaning.

Even where analysis is possible without explicit notice of particular meanings, it is often helpful to note meanings. Thus the call of *I call him Butch* is different both in meaning and in construction from the call of *I call Butch*, and it would be foolish to note the difference in construction and ignore the difference in meaning which it reflects. The same point can be made about the *checkers* of *checkers are generally round* and that of *checkers is easier than chess*.

## V

There is no reason to believe that the grammar of the 1960's would be improved by being based in a carefully worked out phonemics in which stresses, pitches, junctures, and vowel and consonant sounds were analyzed before syntax was attempted. No single syntactic function, and no single part-of-speech category, can be defined in terms of anything phonemic.

Furthermore phonemic segmentation of

<sup>4</sup>Bolinger, "Rime, Assonance, and Morpheme Analysis," *Word*, VI (1950), 133.

the stream of sound is not the same as syntactic. It is true that in such a sequence as *the women are expected to have all the virtues of course the men have all the liberty* the spoken language generally gives clear phonemic indication of the point of division—in this instance, either before or after *of course*. But Whitehall's "scientific" definition of the sentence as "any stretch of utterance between two breath intakes"<sup>5</sup> will not do for grammar, as is plain to anyone who listens to a minister given to long and involved syntactic sentences filled with emotional patterns of pitch and broken by dramatic pauses. In stretches of unnormalized speech what occurs is extremely complex, so that Hockett's insistence that the study of language be based on "edited" speech is an understandable retreat from an overwhelming reality (pp. 142-144). Even within the normalized sentences the phonemists use as examples divisions identified on the basis of phonemic juncture do not coincide with divisions identified syntactically. Published transcriptions of the following sentences—the first in the Trager and Smith *Outline of English Structure*, the second in a Trager-Smithist textbook for Spanish-speaking students of English published under the auspices of the American Council of Learned Societies,<sup>6</sup> the third and fourth in the Hill *Introduction to Linguistic Structures*—divide them all with single-bar terminal junctures at the points where I have placed commas, and indicate the same sequence of pitches (232,231) in all of them: *Long Island, is a long island. I guess my advisor, is going to have some problems. The room was cool, the windows being open. They're really something, the dinners she gives.* In Trager and Smith's analysis each of these sentences is said to be broken into two "clauses" by the terminal junctures within it. Syntactic analysis is supposed to begin by recognizing these "clauses" as syntactic units (pp. 68 ff.). Because of the patterns of pitch and juncture Hill calls *the windows being open* and *the dinners she gives* the "main sentences" in the sequences they terminate (p. 356). A syntactic analysis

such as is advocated earlier in this paper would proceed very differently.

Syntactically unimportant circumstances often determine where phonemic junctures are marked in currently fashionable phonemic transcription. Mere length of the units is often decisive. *It's an island* is a subject-predicator-complement sequence as truly as *Long Island is a long island*, but *s* is so closely associated with *it* that it is unvoiced. Physiologically difficult juxtapositions often result in the marking of junctures. Thus such a verb as *ringed* is interrupted by a plus juncture, Hill tells us, simply because of the accidental juxtaposition of the final consonant sound of *ring* and inflectional /d/ (p. 79). *Wasps* delays us, *warts* does not. The position of stresses, too, is commonly responsible for the location of plus junctures in phonemic transcription. Thus in his *Structure of American English* (1958) Francis writes *whether-eshould* and *stayinbis* solid (pp. 159-160)—as "phonemic words," to use Trager and Smith's term. These are not units for grammar.

The grammarian can proceed with analysis of sentences and words without concerning himself about their precise phonemic content in particular spoken versions. As Sapir wrote, phonetic-phonemic detail is not "the essential fact of language":

The ease with which speech symbolism can be transferred from one sense to another, from technique to technique, itself indicates that the mere sounds of speech are not the essential fact of language, which lies rather in the classification, in the formal patterning, and in the relating of concepts.<sup>7</sup>

A Helen Keller, we recall, can learn the words and syntactic patterns of English by having them spelled out in her hand by her teacher's fingers. A traveler in the West Indies can enter St. George's Church in Basseterre, St. Kitts, and hear an unfamiliar service sung in an unfamiliar dialect of English, and understand. Such a sentence as *you're buying the tickets* can be spoken with the force of a statement or of a question or of an imperative, and can carry clear indications of attitudes ranging from irritation or anger through

<sup>5</sup>Harold Whitehall, *Structural Essentials of English* (1956), p. 29.

<sup>6</sup>F. B. Agard y ayudantes, *El Inglés Hablado* (1953), p. 251.

<sup>7</sup>Edward Sapir, *Language* (1921), p. 21.



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\*Delivered at the Fall 1958 meeting of the N.C.-Va. College English Association; published in THE CEA CRITIC, December 1958.

surprise or bewilderment to delight. This sentence too can be chanted or sung, with little or nothing of the intonation of spoken versions. From the point of view of grammatical analysis, these are matters of packaging; and while obviously packaging is sometimes more important than what is packaged, it is not what the grammarian is concerned with.

Finally, it seems clear that a grammar based in a carefully worked out phonemics, with the usual written forms of the language largely pushed aside as unsatisfactory, cannot win acceptance in the schools. The schools have always been interested primarily in the written language. Two of the "three R's" were devoted to the written language, and none to the spoken. Children learn to use stress, pitch, and juncture without teaching, as they learn facial expression and gesture. Past childhood such things are not learned so easily; but they are of secondary importance, and our respect for Joseph Conrad's mastery of English is not weakened when we read that he had "a very strong foreign accent which . . . even seemed to get worse with age."<sup>8</sup> The writ-

ten language is exacting in its demands of us. It is also of extreme importance in modern life, not only in the communication of complex thought, where the spoken language does badly because it cannot stand still, but even in such comparatively simple matters as driving on superhighways and shopping in supermarkets. The written language is a firmly established institution: we must come to terms with it pretty much as it is. Recorders and television notwithstanding, the ordinary written forms of the language will still be taught in the 1960's. The grammarian should use them. The sharp separation between spoken language and written language which many phonemicists insist on is undesirable for grammar. Nor is such a separation desirable, or even possible, in the real life of a literate population, where even when there is no writing to be done the question which follows *I didn't quite catch your name*, if the name still presents difficulties when it is repeated, is *how do you spell it?*

<sup>8</sup>Gerard Jean-Aubry, *The Sea Dreamer* (1957), p. 283.

## Dr. Kinsey and Professor Fries

JOHN C. SHERWOOD

*Dr. Sherwood is an associate professor and the Director of Composition at the University of Oregon, where he went in 1946 after taking degrees at Lafayette and Yale. Co-editor of A Writer's Reader (1950), he is also author of articles on Dryden, Faulkner, Norris, Cozzens, and freshman composition.*

Our concern was speech, and speech  
impelled us  
To purify the dialect of the tribe  
And urge the mind to aftersight and  
foresight.

T. S. ELIOT

The position occupied by traditional grammar in the American educational system is today an ambiguous one. Though somewhat changed from its old purity, though purged of some of its more arbitrary rules and less useful distinctions, it is still the grammar that most teachers know and teach. Its terminology and system of analysis prevail in all but a very few innovating textbooks; its rules are recorded

by liberal writers who know that they do not strictly accord with average usage; its ancient monuments keep their share of the textbook market; and if its influence has been declining somewhat on the college level, it is actually enjoying a kind of revival in the public schools now that the extremes of progressive education are discredited. At the same time there is a feeling abroad that it is an obsolete discipline, far behind the times, and likely to survive only until the new grammarians agree on a system to replace it. Its opponents treat it with contempt. Professor Laird, one of the kindest, calls it an excellent grammar for Latin. Professor Fries, less charitable, com-

pare it to the medicine of Galen—the medicine, he irrelevantly but suggestively adds, which killed George Washington. And even he is gentler than Professor Lloyd, who dismisses the schoolmarm supporters of the old order with a cheerful “Let’s get rid of Miss Driscoll.”<sup>1</sup> Along with the contempt goes an assumption of the inevitability of progress; the new scientific grammar is coming, and the old must go. This attitude is not unresisted—thousands of teachers go their own way and ignore progress—but with respect to open opposition and reasoned argument, far less has been done than might be. What seems to be wrong is a feeling of guilt in the partisans of the old order, a guilt which arises from a natural American reluctance to be opposed to progress, a feeling that one cannot oppose the findings of science without convicting oneself of superstition, or reject the word of the majority without becoming the despised aristocrat. Raised in an age that accepts a minimum of faith, we look for material foundations for our belief; and the old grammar, we are told, is the creation of unqualified, self-appointed experts, while the new is the outcome of scientific investigation. Some instinctive love of order and tradition may keep us loyal to the old system, but when the apostles of the new harry us with their jibes, we find it hard to make an answer. Nevertheless, an answer can be made; there is nothing in the constitution of the universe that demands a change, and a belief in nouns and pronouns offends neither reason nor morality.

The best way for the old grammarian to restore his shattered self-esteem is to get back to fundamentals, to forget for the moment the catchwords of “science” and “facts of usage” and to look at the basic presuppositions of the two systems. What he needs to do is to see that the acceptance or rejection of the traditional grammar is not really a matter of science and progress; that talk of science and progress obscures rather than clarifies the issues. What the two grammars really reflect is two ways of looking at language, two ideals of language,

and perhaps in the end two ways of life.

Viewed not as obsolete or inadequate science, not as a confusion of English and Latin, but as the concrete application of a philosophy of language, the old grammar is seen to stand for values that are often a good deal more defensible than their opposites. It stands for order, logic, and consistency; for the supremacy of the written language and of the literate classes in setting linguistic standards; for continuity, tradition, and universality—for what is common to older and modern, British and American English, to the whole body of European languages rather than for what is local and singular; for discipline and self-control; for the practice of an art, a system developed by tradition and the authority of masters rather than statistical study. It is aristocratic only in the sense of following Jefferson’s “natural aristocracy,” valuing the language of the leaders of the community, and accepting the right of these to give the law to those who are less skilled; it is snobbish only as all education must be snobbish, as implying the transmission of wisdom from those who possess it to those who do not. It values the language of momentous and dignified occasions over casual talk, language that comes from premeditation and thought rather than spontaneous expression. It is a grammar for the idealistic, for Ortega y Gasset’s “select man,” who is willing to live up to higher standards than the generality are willing to impose upon themselves. In Spengler’s scheme, it ought by its date to be Faustian, the expression of a soaring spirit, but is actually more nearly classical, an expression of order and limitation, like plane geometry. Loving logic and order, it opposes oddity and irregularity, and at times may have the coldness that goes with order and regularity. It is not resigned to the chaos of experience but wishes to impose its own order upon it; it believes, with Orwell, in man’s power to master his linguistic environment. It may recognize Perrin’s language levels but attaches little importance to the lower levels; it attempts to raise the illiterate to the level of the literate, not to average everyone out to a common level. It is best to think of it not as Platonic, dwelling in a realm apart from concrete reality, but as Aristotelian, the

<sup>1</sup>Charlton Laird, *The Miracle of Language* (1957), p. 137; Charles C. Fries, *The Structure of English* (1952), p. 1; Donald J. Lloyd, “Let’s Get Rid of Miss Driscoll,” *The Education Forum* (Mar. 1954), 341-348.



"form" of reality, what reality would be shorn of the anomalous and accidental, what reality at its best tends to be. It is usage, but usage ordered by reflection.

If the older grammar is naturally associated with a certain view of life, so is the new; it is in accord with some things which are good and many things which are questionable in modern life and thought. As a *Sprachanschauung*, if not as a science, it stands for democracy; for spontaneity, self-expression, and permissiveness; for nominalism; for skepticism; for a social-scientific view of life; for progress and modernity; for nationalism and regionalism. It is "other-directed," seeing the proper standard of conduct as conformity to the mores of the group. It represents a linguistic Rousseauism, a belief that man's language is best and most real when most spontaneous and unpremeditated and that it is somehow tainted by the efforts of educational systems to order and regularize it. Just as the old grammar tried to take its values from above, the new tries to deduce them, in the manner of Dr. Kinsey, from the facts.

If we keep these basic attitudes in mind, the differences on particular points will seem natural. The old definition of a sentence as the expression of a complete thought is doubtless vague and could not serve as an absolutely reliable measure for separating sentences from non-sentences; but as an expression of a traditional ideal of what a sentence ought to be it serves very well, better in fact than modern behavioristic definitions which can only tell us that a sentence is something that ends with a certain tone, without telling us why people should wish to put a mark of finality at that particular point—though the modern linguist's definition is natural for him, based as it is on observation of the facts. The devotion to the old parts of speech is equally natural, because they link English to the past and to the European speech community and to the traditions of European and American education; and more subtly (and here we are opposing Laird's functionalism rather than Fries's classes) because the parts of speech give to words a permanent, fixed character—they *are* something and do not merely *do* something; though modern physics confounds matter and energy, though Locke overthrew

substance, though the Pueblo Indian gets along without subjects and predicates, yet common sense clings to Aristotle, and in grammar shuns Hayakawa's notion that a word is never the same thing twice. It is true that the traditionalist has foolishly allowed certain petty issues to acquire a symbolical value for him and that he has come to act as if the distinction between *like* and *as* were somehow bound up with the constitution of the universe; but once one admits, as any educator must, that language is to be regulated, it is hard to say where to stop, and the older grammarian would claim at the very least the right to correct usage when it is in conflict with itself. The controversy over the "he-is-one-of-those-who-is" construction shows the two factions behaving typically, the one trying to impose order and consistency and the other following statistical frequency, which is a value but not a value superior to order and consistency. This same love of clarity and consistency is all the explanation we really need for the traditional stands on fragments, on agreement, and pronoun reference; sloppiness in these areas is especially destructive of the balance and harmony the traditionalist loves. The opposing attitudes toward the written and spoken languages are equally revealing. Fries sarcastically observes: "The rhetorical sentences of written composition rather than the grammatical sentences of living speech have occupied the attention of most teachers. . . ."<sup>2</sup> But why should we speak of "living" speech as if writing were something dead and mummified? And why (if this is the intent) should we take spontaneity and casualness as a better guarantee of genuineness than care and thought? Here is another outbreak of Rousseauism. It is not unreasonable to argue that the spoken language should be the standard on the ground that it existed first and is more spontaneous; but it would be just as reasonable, even in scientific studies, to prefer the written language, not only as being more easily observed, but as representing the ideal toward which the spoken language tends, as representing what an educated person would say if he could always speak with premeditation instead of

<sup>2</sup>Fries, *The Structure of English*, p. 12.



having to respond immediately to the pressures of conversation. There is nothing "prescientific" about a preference for writing.

This whole matter of a "scientific" grammar badly needs clarification. The pretensions of the new grammar to be scientific are perfectly reasonable up to a point, though it is the science of the behavioral rather than the natural sciences and is too much bound up with human emotions to achieve a very high degree of mathematical exactitude.<sup>3</sup> When the linguist tries to examine the actual facts of linguistic behavior without preconception or bias, he has a right to think of himself as following the scientific method. He sometimes tends to exaggerate the results. Grammar is a system of classification and generalization and can work smoothly only insofar as there is a degree of uniformity and regularity in the language it describes. Where the old grammar fails, it may fail through faulty classification, or it may fail because the complexity of the phenomena almost prevents classification, just as the platypus is hard to fit into any zoological scheme. The peculiar historical position of English, changing (it is said) from an inflected to a distributive basis, makes matters doubly difficult and allows grammarians of different persuasions to impose their different systems upon it with partial but never complete success. Yet even if the linguists could manage to agree on a workable empirical grammar, based simply on generalization from the facts, only a few fanatics would ever be naive enough to confuse a system of empirical generalizations with a standard of value. In the moral realm, Dr. Kinsey may approach the notion that whatever is right, but few of us are willing to follow him.<sup>4</sup>

So too, the endless accumulation of facts about usage, however scientific, does not excuse the scholar from defining what he means by a standard language. If he chooses to make certain decisions on logical or

esthetic grounds, no statistics can shake his position. If one man demands a "scientific" grammar and another man a "logical" one, the dispute cannot be settled by reference to science or philosophy; it can only be settled on the basis of feeling or preference, or compatibility with one's view of life, or on such grounds as utility or teachability. Discoveries about the facts of usage may overthrow some of the false assertions about usage which have been grafted onto the old grammar (the *shall-will* distinction is a case in point) just as statistics about the marriageability of fallen women may overthrow the *Reader's Digest's* contention that chastity does pay; but since Christian morality does not rest on the idea of an earthly reward nor normative grammar on a literal transcript of usage, neither can be invalidated by statistics.

The difference is not after all the difference between right and wrong or between reaction and progress, but between two basic sets of postulates. The feeling that change is inevitable at the present time means nothing. The change could have been made long since—Hazlitt, following Horne Tooke, preached usage and empirical grammar, but most of the writers and educators of his time did not wish to follow him. Even the magic word *science* will not explain matters, for science conquered some areas of language study long ago, and in some, such as literary scholarship, it has run its cycle and is just now being evicted. Complex as the matter is, we must see the shift as part of a general shift of values in society and education. If Spengler can see even geometry and calculus as expressions of the civilizations that produced them, the more human and responsive field of language can reasonably be regarded in the same way. In fact the point is scarcely disputed; the old grammar is often disparaged for its eighteenth-century associations with British aristocracy and authority, while the new is praised not only for being scientific but for being democratic and even "American." What is wrong is the automatic assumption that a grammar is meant to be democratic. The progressives would feel far less confident if they dropped their catch-words and turned to William Whyte's *The Organization Man* or David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd*;

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Oliver M. Willard, "A Footnote to Laird's 'Parts,'" and Charlton Laird, "A Footnote to the Footnote," *College English*, XIX (May 1958), 353-357.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Morton W. Bloomfield, "The Problem of Fact and Value in the Teaching of English," *College English*, XV (Oct. 1953), 33-37.

they would be embarrassed to see how neatly the dispute fits into the categories of these modern Carlyles and Ruskins. For the old grammar does fit Riesman's concept of the inner-directed man; it is meant to be a kind of conscience, built into the student to guide him through all the changes of his linguistic environment; and the new grammar is unmistakably other-directed, with its emphasis on levels of usage and its implied command to conform to the linguistic habits of the group of the moment. When Whyte describes the old-time leader, the man who is prepared to assume responsibility, he could well be describing the Lindley Murrays of the past who assumed the responsibility of regulating language and became authorities because people accepted them as such; and when he describes the modern government by committee which has infected even business, he could well be describing the present linguistic situation, where the highest aspiration of a linguistic lawgiver is to become a statistician. Here as elsewhere we find it easier to see the ideas of the past in their social context than to do the same with our own.

Even if the Organization Man had not demanded a grammar to suit his way of life, some sort of attempt at change would have been made inevitable by another circumstance: the inundation of all levels of education by great mobs of students whom before 1930 no one would have thought of trying to educate beyond the elementary level. Such students naturally had trouble with grammar, just as they had trouble with mathematics and science; and since it would have been undemocratic to suspect them of incapacity, the blame was naturally shifted to the teacher and her traditions. The demand for a grammar for morons was inevitable. Such a grammar is really incompatible with the scientific ideal or even the doctrine of usage, since the poorer student can only comprehend a simplified grammar, and a simplified grammar would do violence to the complexities of English syntax. (Where Fries genuinely succeeds in being more scientific than the old grammar, it is usually at the expense of multiplying terms and distinctions.) The dream, however, remains and will probably find expression in many textbooks before it finally fades away. At least the present situation is pro-

ductive of hope: the liberals can dream, with Professor Marckwardt, that because the "taboos" and "anxiety neuroses" caused by the old grammar are being replaced by "healthy linguistic attitudes," "a new era lies before all the English-speaking peoples";<sup>5</sup> and the conservative, supposing that the decline of grammar instruction in the public schools is responsible for the illiteracy of his students, can dream of a millennium of literacy brought about by a great revival of grammar. Neither is reduced to the cynicism he might feel if he supposed that illiteracy were due to the permanent frailties in human nature.

The point of this argument is not to remove grammar from the jurisdiction of reason and investigation; on the contrary, our whole point is to show that, aside from some excesses of the *shall-will* type, the old grammar is a reasonable consequence of premises which are often more rational than their opposites. If the new grammar is more rationalistic in its methods of analyzing language, the old is more zealous in making of language itself a precise logical instrument. Nor is it the intent of this essay to disparage the scientific analysis of language for its own sake, though such analysis might prove to be most drab and least useful pedagogically when most scientific. What is real science in the new grammar would probably be accepted without question if it did not carry with it so many premature exhortations to action. When a linguist presents his analyses of the workings of language, we can feel only sympathetic admiration; when he suggests that our belief in nouns and pronouns is equivalent to a belief that the sun revolves around the earth, we may reject his whole work out of irritation. This contempt for the past helps to exclude all accommodation and compromise. The two positions are not after all so impossibly opposed. They do not seem so very far apart when compared to the positions of the real extremists, the common man who cares nothing for any kind of linguistic analysis, and the philosopher who dreams of an utterly unambiguous language in the manner of symbolic logic. A pragmatist might argue that there

<sup>5</sup>Albert H. Marckwardt, *American English* (1958), pp. 184-185.

is often little practical difference between a prescriptive grammarian who takes account of changes in the language and a descriptive grammarian who confines his observations to cultivated usage; he might wonder too how much difference the genuine distinctions would make after they had been blurred by the student mind. The practical teacher might well find that a mixture of concepts from both systems would be most useful; the definition of a sentence as an expression of a complete thought is not incompatible with its definition as a free utterance. Already those politicians of composition, the textbook writers, have made many compromises. But these are matters that could occupy many essays. The point to be emphasized here is

that nothing is to be settled by judging the old grammar on the basis of the assumptions of the new; each must be seen in the light of its own assumptions, and these in turn must be compared in terms of more general standards or values. The difference between the two grammars is not a question of accuracy or progressiveness, but of fundamental premises, and the premises of the old grammar are perfectly reasonable. It is a system that can be taught without apologies. Our world is a Lucretian flux, where "no single thing abides, but all things flow"; and if there is something in our intellectual life that we can preserve, even if it is only the ancient terms of grammatical analysis, then we are one step farther from the abyss.

## The Case Against Structural Linguistics in Composition

A. M. TIBBETTS

*A technical editor in the Extension Course Institute at the Air University in Alabama, Mr. Tibbetts took his B.A. at Colorado and his M.A. at the State University of Iowa.*

... nor did Pnin, as a teacher, ever presume to approach the lofty halls of modern scientific linguistics, that ascetic fraternity of phonemes, that temple wherein earnest young people are taught not the language itself, but the method of teaching others to teach that method; which method, like a waterfall splashing from rock to rock, ceases to be a medium of rational navigation but perhaps in some fabulous future may become instrumental in evolving esoteric dialects—Basic Basque and so forth—spoken only by certain elaborate machines.

—Vladimir Nabokov, *Pnin* (1957)

Every age has its crises, and every profession its panaceas. The teacher of college composition—and college literature, for that matter—owns by nature an uneasy conscience; and since Sputnik the twinges of guilt have become so strong as to be downright painful. The crisis: students read and write worse than ever; the shadow of the Russian Bear falls athwart our remedial English classes where a quarterback and the daughter of the local Superintendent of Schools painfully move their lips in vacant

air and their fingers on the page. The panacea: Structural Linguistics. *To be taken by the student during each class hour and once before retiring; to be swallowed whole by the professor as often as possible during the day, and twice as often on week-ends.*

However, upon investigation, many of us who teach composition have discovered that linguistics is a dangerous medicine, a nostrum whose properties are as unstable as chlorine, although linguists are fond of prescribing large doses for diseases so different as *Hypothesis Contrary to Fact* and *Acute Semi-Colonitis*. Linguists are, indeed, wondrously sure of themselves, a fact which all by itself is enough to make one suspicious of them.

First, a definition: A structural linguist (hereinafter called simply *linguist*) is one who, generally speaking, believes the following: (1) that description is preferred to prescription, (2) that language must be studied scientifically, (3) that speaking is

more important than writing, (4) that the form of a language is more important than its content, (5) that in language, nothing is "right" or "wrong." Last, and possibly most significant because upon this assumption hangs the entire argument, (6) that the conventional grammar does not perfectly describe English.

There are no specific errors of fact here—at least there are no errors of concrete fact like, for instance, "Columbus discovered the New World in 1603," or "Dirt is good for little boys to eat." The six parts of the definition which I have culled from several dozen articles and books on the subject form a coherent philosophy, and are themselves philosophical statements. It is probable that any linguist could point to many solid facts which could support clearly and sufficiently each statement of the definition. Since the question seems to be philosophical, it is proper to look into the logic of linguistics; and here we discover a number of philosophical irrelevances, based upon faulty logic, false emphasis, and a general and sometimes hilarious confusion.

The first philosophical irrelevance is that linguists consider the study of writing a *science*, instead of what it is, an *art*. A pall of scientism hangs over our sweet tongue. Our grammar has been called by W. Nelson Francis an "infinitely delicate system . . . not unworthy to be set beside the equally beautiful organization of the physical universe." If this hint is not enough for the empirically minded, we are reminded by other linguists of the basically scientific nature of the teacher-researcher. James MacMillan compares the linguist to a pharmacist; Harry Warfel, in a recent issue of *College English*, says that "a teacher's self-respect will increase as he senses that his profession has its own subject-matter and its own technology in which he can be an expert. Like a physician or an engineer, he has specialized in a limited field of knowledge. . . ." The teacher of English, says Paul Roberts, "cannot reasonably ignore linguistic science any more than the teacher of astronomy can reasonably ignore physics." (For references passim, see page 285.)

Such howlers must be based more upon an ignorance of science than an ignorance

of language. The very heart of the scientific method is, of course, the assumption that "facts" exist and that repeatable experiments can be performed upon those "facts." The catch is that some sciences are stabler than others in this respect; for instance, mineralogy and seismology can both be considered geological sciences, but a mineralogist can usually be a good deal more sure of his "facts" than can a seismologist; and the former's experiments are likely to be much more repeatable (with identical results) than the latter's are. And when you come to the social sciences (history, sociology, economics) there is doubt as to whether they are sciences at all. What is a sociological "fact"? Have repeatable sociological experiments ever been performed? Linguists often display their ignorance of the nature of science by remarks such as the following: The linguist's "criteria of definition and classification are therefore very much the same as those of the anthropologist or the chemist," a remark which ignores the fact that anthropology and chemistry are completely different "sciences." Anthropology, in fact, probably isn't a science.

All this leads to what I call the *linguistic lie*—that the linguists should be followed, must be followed, because they are the only ones who are discovering anything "new about language." In true sciences, of course, there is always the unknown just around the corner, an unknown which may exist outside of man's mind. But language is a subjective affair, a thing of the brain and emotions. The good use of language, like the good use of any art form, depends upon the intelligence of the artist, his sensibility, his training. Is there, really, anything *new* about language? Is there any linguist who knows more about language than Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Dickens, Twain, D. H. Lawrence? Is it possible that some artist-writer in the future will write better than these long-dead artist-writers because he has had the advantage of the science of linguistics? I think not.

A second kind of philosophical irrelevance derives also from the pseudo-scientism that I have just been talking about. Open a book on linguistics and you may think you have gotten into the *Complete Works of Lewis Carroll* by mistake.

"All mimsy were the borogoves," you see, and "The uggle wogs a diggle," and "a seckly diggle of nerbal facks." Flip a page or two and you find formulae that look Einsteinian in their complexity. This is not what it appears to be—a genial insanity—but rather an attempt scientifically to divorce meaning from structure, in order to study the latter. Listen to Harry Warfel in *College English*: "Since a writer's style is based primarily upon his syntactical choices, structural grammar insists that rhetoricians should state their rules in terms of syntactical operations." From this it follows that "Imitative pattern practice is essential whenever a student is allegedly 'at a loss for words.' No student lacks words; he lacks experience in putting the words he knows into patterns . . . . What the student needs is not vocabulary but the modes of language operation . . . ." The trouble with this is that it is not true. Students *do* lack words; Mr. Warfel should give a vocabulary test some time and discover this for himself. Words, moreover, are the writer's tools. The more tools he has the more "language operations," in Mr. Warfel's jargon, he can express. And his ability to express ideas with precision will depend more upon a careful choice of words than upon syntax.

I must now turn to a third kind of philosophical irrelevance. This one has come from a linguistic preoccupation with the wrong objects of study. When an artist studies writing, he must study writing; when a teacher teaches writing, he must teach writing. But a typical linguist is likely to be parsing the New York City telephone directory. Fries based some conclusions on English structure upon recorded telephone conversations; he did other researches on letters in the files of a government agency in Washington. You will hunt in vain for the proper titles for his published research, which should be: *The Structure of Oral English Used in Recorded Telephone Conversations and English Grammar Written in Letters to Such and Such Agency*. No careful scientist would have called his books, based upon such limited data, *The Structure of English and American English Grammar*.

More important, however, is that a student who wants to write well should take

as his models established writers who write well. A writer, like any artist, needs good models; and they must be written models. Writing is different from speaking; and the linguists' refusal to discriminate properly between the two arts has caused no end of unnecessary confusion, as a result of which we have freshman courses that combine speech and writing which end up teaching the student neither art. Moreover, such courses, usually under the unpleasant title of Communication Skills, leave the student with the impression that speaking is as important as writing, that oral glibness is as valuable to mankind as logical thinking carefully put on paper. Actually, the only way thinking can ever be tested and checked is to write it down, because writing is the frozen form of speaking.

The linguistic dogma that calls speech more important than writing only reflects the more insidious dogma that language changes. This is a major tenet in linguistic philosophy. A linguist said recently to me, in a most triumphant tone: "Well! You certainly can't deny that language changes, now can you?" No, I told him, well aware that if I did deny it, I would promptly be a candidate for the strait jacket. No, but I could, and did, assert that so far as we as writers and teachers are concerned, changes in language are not *at present* significant. The fact that Anglo-Saxon is now a foreign language, the fact that vowel-shift occurred in the fifteenth century, the fact that Shakespeare's language is different from ours—these facts are interesting historically. But to a writer, or a teacher of writing, they are of negligible significance. For one thing, conditions are different now; English is not changing so fast because more people can read and write, and oral English, in which the changes mostly occur, is depending more upon written English for its rules and regulations. Too, teachers, editors, and other policemen of language have wider influence than ever before. For another thing, the written language, which is what I insist we must talk about when we talk about writing as teachers and students, does not nowadays appreciably change in an artist's lifetime. Look at Stephen Crane, the early Dreiser, Mark Twain. Can anyone seriously say that our written language has changed signifi-



cantly since their day? Indeed, one can learn much about the writing art from them. So, I must conclude, the linguistic dogma that language changes is another example of a long-range historical truth which is not particularly pertinent to the writing process.

It is, however, partly from a study of language history that a fourth linguistic irrelevance has come. This is the idea that there is an American language as opposed to a British language—Hook and Mathews call their book *Modern American Grammar and Usage*. It is hard to understand how this notion has taken such hold on English teachers, unless you consider the terrific influence of American educationist theory as it is taught to every would-be public school teacher across the country.

American educationist theory is pragmatic and chauvinist, with a religious belief in democracy and Demos as its god. Robert Hall says that when we condemn the ditch-digger's speech, "this factor in our speech attitudes is a relic from earlier, antidemocratic times, which accords very poorly with other aspects of our modern aspirations to true democracy." It is difficult to see what democracy has got to do with education, much less with speech or writing. So far as the students are concerned, a school cannot be democratic. Students cannot by vote determine their grades. What good student writing is cannot be discovered by a chorus of *ayes* and *nays* from the students themselves. The teacher determines this, and he does it by appeal to the highest authorities—good writers of the past and present.

Not only would the educationists have us believe that there is a separate American language, they would also have us teach that there are different levels of usage within the "American" language. I suppose that it is helpful to recognize this, in a general way, but isn't it obvious? If a student is so dull that he doesn't recognize that he ordinarily speaks in one way to the plumber and writes in another way when he applies for a job, he is probably not educable anyway. For the teacher to teach "that different forms and structures are in use in the English-speaking community, in different places, on different social levels, and for different purposes,"

as one linguist wishes us to do, is to waste time pounding the obvious. Besides, this is basically a social problem, and is therefore not our affair.

Indeed, the influence of the public school educationists on structural linguistics is enormous. The excessive pragmatism, the horror of value judgments, the missionary zeal, the sensitivity to criticism, the dislike of mental discipline, the aversion to authority and the enduring values of the past—all are typical of both modern structural linguists and educationists. When a professor of education wants to quote an authority on composition, he usually picks a linguist. Harold Allen, in his own collection, *Applied English Linguistics*, remarks that the teacher should "inculcate sound attitudes toward language in his students." Nothing about writing with precision and intelligence; one must infer from such statements that linguists don't care if their students are illiterate, just so long as they have "sound attitudes," which are in practice impossible to define or determine.

The aversion to authority that I mentioned above leads to the linguists' inclination to debunk everything in sight. There is no such thing as "good English," say they (often using "good English" while they say it doesn't exist!); there is no logic in grammar; you can't define what a sentence is, or a paragraph; nobody knows for certain what a noun is; likewise a verb, etc., etc. This kind of irresponsibility is bad enough among professionals talking to each other. It is worse when a linguist like Paul Roberts addresses the college student in his freshman text with such comments as "English spelling is a mess," "The most obvious thing about the word *grammar* is that it gives off a certain odor. To put it somewhat more plainly, it smells," and "Intellectually, it [English grammar] can only be described as a mess."

Apart from the violent untruth of these remarks, what is one to make of their appalling cuteness? Of their appeal to the students' own natural adolescent dislike of authority? Everyone knows the weak teacher who covers his weaknesses with an attempt to curry favor with undergraduates. The linguist, it seems, too often tries to cover up the weaknesses of his intellectual pretensions by toadying to the



students, who would love to hear that everything that they have been taught about grammar is a "mess."

And, for that matter, I must object to the linguistic statement that grammatical definitions do not define. I have never had any practical trouble in the classroom with the traditional definitions of *noun*, *verb*, *adjective*, *sentence*, and *paragraph*. Nor do I know of any other teacher who has had trouble. Practically speaking, these definitions work well enough. The difficulties that linguists find are phony, insofar as the classroom is concerned. Philosophically, they may have a point, but the fine taxonomic distinctions, with which they are so often concerned, can be meaningless or confusing to the unsophisticated freshman.

Since we are discussing the student, perhaps it would be valuable to look at some typical students' writing problems to see whether the ideas of the linguists can help freshmen to write better. Here are four typical sentences taken from freshman papers (*italics* are mine):

(1) In this story that *Im* taling about; there was a *cooperation joint operation*.

(2) This *uninterested* *writer* man *Cozzen's* likes people I *feel* as he has his story come out *alright* in the end.

(3) City children *never* get any sunshine.

(4) In France, *people* accept sex for *what* it is.

It seems to me that there are two primary defects in the education of the untrained writer: first, he has not been taught the necessity of using words with precision and accuracy; and second, he has not been taught to think. Sentences (1) and (2) are lovely examples of sloppy diction. The story was an *article* in a reader; *cooperation* was supposed to be *cooperating*, but I never did get across to the student that *cooperating joint operation* was not only meaningless but also an affront to the ear. In (2), *uninterested* was supposed to mean *disinterested*; *feel* was supposed to mean *think*; *as* was supposed to mean *because*. The sentences don't communicate because the writer, like Lewis Carroll's Humpty Dumpty (who defined *glory* as a "nice knock-down argument"), has chosen his own meanings as he went along.

Sentences (3) and (4) illustrate what can happen when writers are not forced to

think things through. With (3), one is tempted, like the crew of the *Pinafore*, to ask, "What, *never*?" And with (4)—does the writer mean that there are none in France who have taken the vows of celibacy? Are there no old maids? What does *for what it is* mean? Is there a definition implied here? Do all Frenchmen "accept" sex in the same way?

These typical sentences indicate that the most important problems in teaching freshman English are problems of meaning, not of structure. Linguistics cannot solve these problems because, by definition, the linguistic discipline is based upon form, not content. But what about the errors of proofreading, spelling, punctuation, and grammar (in the four sentences) that I have not mentioned? What about *Im* for *I'm*, *taling* for *talking*, *alright* for *all right*, *Cozzen's* for *Cozzens*? What about the misused semicolon in (1) and the odd use of *writer* in (2)? Can linguistics help us here?

So far as I know, or can infer from their writings, most linguists would say that the only way to learn to spell, proofread, punctuate, and use decent grammar is to practice these arts. Which is what the traditional grammarian would have prescribed in the first place. The linguist wants to use a different grammatical notation—a different one but not necessarily a better one. The systems that I have seen are rather more complicated than the one we've got.

Although it is true that the conventional grammar does not describe modern English with complete accuracy, it does describe English well enough so that students of normal intelligence can get a start with their writing. The difficulties that linguists see in conventional grammar are in their heads, not in the students'. It is with the practice of writing that we must get ahead with anyhow, not with the lint-picking philosophical distinctions that the linguists are presenting us with.

Mr. W. Nelson Francis says that the use of structural linguistics will help to prevent one's writing a sentence such as the following: "Having eaten our lunch, the steamboat departed." I don't see how. Presumably, linguistics cannot cure stupidity, and a student would have to be stupid not to see the ridiculousness of that sentence. It is part of the English teacher's duty, you

know, to separate the unintelligent and the lazy from his institution as quickly and as painlessly as possible. Linguistics cannot help—not even penicillin can help—a young gentleman or lady who insists on personifying steamboats in such an individual fashion.

Vladimir Nabokov's remark, I believe, holds true. What we want is a "medium of rational navigation," and this means that we must ourselves learn to think and we must teach our students to think and to put their thoughts carefully on paper. We have had at hand for many years the tested tools of grammar and traditional rhetoric—*argument* and *exposition* (classification, definition, illustration)—methods which give young writers practice in handling and evaluating ideas. What minor help the structural linguists can give us, let us gladly take. But we must remember that their claims

to educational infallibility, like the claims of the discredited Deweyan educationists, have been proved spurious. If we follow the linguists, Nabokov's "esoteric dialect" may some day be English; and the "certain elaborate machines" may be us.

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## Brand Spanking New, Old as the Hills, Friend in Need, or Bitterest Foe, the Cliché Must Be Watched Like a Hawk

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To learn is to change oneself a little, often a painful process since nearly everyone values himself rather highly from moment to moment. This fact may cause student resistance at times to any subject, but the problem is continually with the English language teacher. An individual's language is not so much close to him as it is an inseparable element of his individuality, in chemical rather than mechanical combination with the rest of his physiology and his experiences. If his personal language differs from the standard to any great extent, he is likely either to resist consciously or unconsciously the re-creation of himself which he senses that the re-creation of his language will make, or to develop his school language as a superstructure to his personality, one which can be with difficulty mounted for particular purposes but on which he is never comfortable. Most language teachers no doubt become in a general way aware of this situation, but it is difficult to keep it in mind constantly while teaching, and clearly impossible to understand each student well enough to overcome

all of his particular resistances. Language therefore tends to be taught as a matter of self-evident or "by definition" truths, like the multiplication tables, and of reasonable practices which any fool can plainly understand and will want to follow as soon as they are pointed out to him, as one cooks pork once he learns about trichinosis.

These generalizations are by way of opening a discussion of the continuing, annoying, and dangerous use of the cliché in American language and thought. The most usual argument against the cliché (a glance at a random dozen recent composition books will verify the claim) is that it is stylistically or rhetorically ineffective. Worn by long use, its smooth surface fails to stimulate, to excite, to do anything but repel the sensitive reader.

One would think this were argument enough. Yet on possibly no other problem of composition are students and teachers less likely to come to quick agreement. Understanding to some extent the ease with which one may slip into a cliché, the teacher nevertheless is likely to feel that

pointing out the error and giving a few examples should convince anyone that a cliché is ineffective communication, and that no belaboring of the point should be necessary, however diligently one must work to avoid the error in practice. The typical student, however, feels no sense of sin in committing a cliché. Either he has not read or listened enough to have any feeling for the triteness—the expression merely sounds effective to him: he remembers how impressed he was the first time he heard it and thinks to capture that effectiveness for his own writing—or he simply thinks in clichés and has great difficulty recognizing them as a separable part of his language.

Baffled because the student cannot even understand what a cliché is, or because, understanding, he fails to sense the ineffectiveness, the teacher is likely to make stern and final pronouncements and thereafter to discourage the cliché in student papers or speeches primarily by punishment. Argument on the basis of taste is futile, he reasons; establishing acceptable practice through authority may have some virtue; and meanwhile one can hope that the student will in time develop a sensitivity to the vice, can hope that he too eventually will find the smooth, worn surface repelling rather than stimulating or comforting.

The difficulty, I believe, is much deeper and the solution more important than this approach assumes. One can argue that style is ultimately important, that manner inevitably helps determine matter. But in the doubtless necessary separation of the two in language skills teaching, most students and perhaps some teachers think of style as something imposed on the matter: the student in an English class is likely to become concerned not so much with what he has to say as in saying something—anything—in a pretty or fancy or elaborate or even correct and concise way. The cliché, he learns, is for some reason not acceptable in the strange game of Using Language Which Will Impress an English Teacher. He therefore may try to avoid it whenever he is using his school language, but unless he comes to appreciate the importance of the problem, he will continue to use clichés and to be impressed by others who use them in his actual communication situations.

To understand why he will do so, it is necessary, I suspect, to understand something of why the cliché remains popular despite all that can be said against it. Then perhaps we can speak more definitely of its dangers and also of the opportunity it gives teachers to show students the importance of using language well.

First of all, then, it should be recognized that the cliché does have definite values for most people, including most students, that it is not the obvious and unmixed evil that most writing instructors consider it to be. Most teachers of English (at least those voluntarily teaching it, and trained to teach it) are in the work because they are sensitive to language, have experienced a great deal of first-rate writing of all sorts, have themselves wanted to use their language effectively. Without any specific rule ever having been given them, they would try to avoid expressions which they noticed had been overused. Those who do run into the rule against clichés before they become aware of the problem, immediately recognize the rule as valid: they need no persuasion. But most students are not so. Except as a person develops what might be called a scholar's or explorer's interest in some particular area, he wants whatever he deals with to be stable. He wants all things arranged so that he doesn't have to bother about them, to think about them. This is just as true of his ideas as of his possessions, his family, his neighborhood, his society.

Clichés are an essential part of many a person's sense of stability. To the extent that he has a word or phrase immediately available for everything he experiences, he feels that he controls it and doesn't have to worry about it. If his business, his social situations, his politics, his religion, are all managed by clichés, he can be comfortable, feel unthreatened, be secure. To the extent that clichés come to his mind as he tries to communicate any situation or experience to an audience, be it large or small, he finds the communication easy, unstrained, pleasant. Likewise he is at ease as an audience when someone else discusses a matter in clichés.

This situation has important practical consequences. It clearly is no accident that many people desiring mass appeal—politicians, advertisers, radio commentators,

newspaper writers—use the cliché as a matter of course. Undoubtedly, nearly all of them are aware that clichés are not found in the writing and speaking that appeals to people familiar with at least some of the best that has been thought and said in the world. But this fact has no bearing on their aim, which is to make themselves, their program, their product understandable to, acceptable to, appealing to, large numbers of people.

Thus a prerequisite to the intelligent teaching of the evils of the cliché is to realize that in common with much evil that is any problem to mankind, it has its appeal and its rewards. It is not embraced because of its evil but because of its good: it has qualities which help people get some jobs done easily and effectively. It helps maintain a sense of security in the minds of those who find new ideas upsetting, who dislike having to think through situations for themselves.

The teacher further should be aware, nor be astonished, that for particular purposes some experts advise the use of clichés. Their defenses of it cannot be lightly dismissed, and the language teacher aware of the values of the cliché and the pressures which may drive men to its use will better appreciate the problem of fighting its evils. In a democracy a politician must work with people as he finds them at any given time; who can blame him for using any device which will help him avoid hostility and help convince people that he and his program should be supported? The seller in a free economy must somehow convince people to buy; if a cliché will help make people feel good about a product, the ad man will use it. A newspaperman must meet deadlines daily, and must write so that people may read without difficulty; clichés make the task of both the writer and the average reader easy.

Even the best men make some use of the cliché. Miller and Villarreal examined speeches by Churchill, Roosevelt, Eden, and Wallace, concluding that in general they used clichés effectively. Fayant (see Bibliographical Note, "Anon.") made a study of ad clichés and reported that the phrase asserting some sort of world supremacy is the one most used. A successful advertising man, Fayant also noted that

he himself had used the cliché in his work as an ad writer.

The cliché, then, is not to be dismissed as beneath the notice of people of culture and taste, such as English teachers; they will have to pay attention to it whether they wish to or not. But shall we therefore give up and teach the cliché as Morrah and Freedman, for example, advise? Shall we drill lists of clichés into students and reward those who can work the greatest number of them into their papers? Fowler forbid! What, then, shall we do?

The defenses both imply the dangers and suggest the best attack against them. For a start, even to admit that the cliché may be effective is to get away from a mechanical rule and to ask for thought concerning it, for discrimination in its use. The cliché, whose greatest evil perhaps is that it makes for mechanical rather than thoughtful expression and acceptance (or rejection) of ideas, is often taught mechanically: a list of some clichés, with the rule to avoid them. It is important therefore to define the cliché not merely as an overworked word or phrase but as the ineffective use of an overworked one. As Gowers puts it:

A cliché may be defined as a phrase whose aptness in a particular context when it was first invented has won it such popularity that it has become hackneyed, and is used without thought in contexts where it is no longer apt. Clichés are notorious enemies of the precise word. (p. 106)

The significance of such a definition is emphasized by the report of Miller and Villarreal that there was little agreement among their checkers in noting clichés in the speeches they examined. Although in all speeches there were many expressions which might be found in formal cliché lists, these were not consistently identified as such when they were read in the context of the speech. Even though the readers were looking for clichés, they did not each mark the same expressions, and all of them overlooked in context many expressions which they marked as clichés when the phrases were presented for evaluation out of any context. In the speeches, in other words, the clichés were not used so frequently, blatantly, or inexactly that they called attention to themselves.

Lest such a definition, however, seem to

be begging the question or generalizing the term cliché beyond usefulness, let us admit that some phrases are almost inevitably clichés, whatever their context, and that lists therefore may be helpful as part of the process of learning what to avoid. But more important is to examine the use of the cliché, to show some that have proved effective, and to ask the student why; to show others which it is hoped he can see are not effective, and to ask why; to have the student think about them and decide for himself as much as possible.

Such a presentation to students can carry the question beyond that of rhetorical effectiveness to that of the cliché's effect on our thinking, on our capacity for seeing things as they are, and solving problems on that basis. Use of the cliché, in fact, is a significant part of the whole functioning of language, and can provide vivid examples of its values and abuses. Life and thought at their best are complex processes. If one is to interpret life clearly and express his interpretation accurately, he must make subtle distinctions. His language must continually grow with new experiences. At its highest level this is work for genius, but at any level it is important to full living, and for us ordinary people nothing else is likely to interfere with it as much as the cliché habit does. The thought anticipating, accompanying, interpreting, and remembering the experience is after all that which gives it the values we call human. To pigeonhole each unpleasant experience as too horrible to talk about or a fate worse than death or a lousy break, and each good one as the time of a life or a mad whirl or a wonderful day is to reduce all experience to a level little above that of experience untouched by thought. Thus the cliché is vicious not primarily because it is stale and therefore ineffective (telling as that fact is), but because it endangers clear and accurate thought, and therefore clear and accurate interpretation and recording of experience, and clear and accurate analysis of problems and formulation of solutions. For we in general recognize language as the primary tool of thought: thought without language is possible only at the lowest or highest levels, and at the latter it usually struggles to invent language to express new thought and experience.

Moreover, the teacher can depend on the cliché always to be a part of the teaching situation; always examples will come from the students themselves in their writing and speaking assignments and in ordinary class discussion (and from the teacher too, very likely). Also, the student has experienced a good many clichés, whether or not he is aware of the term. The cliché therefore offers a particularly good opportunity to discuss denotation and connotation, rational language and emotional language, and the values of each, a good opportunity to show the effect that language has on the student's thinking and feeling, in other words, and therefore on his life.

Many students, for example, will already be mildly skeptical of advertising assertions, and nearly all of them will have read enough advertising to agree with absurdities called to their attention. Not more than one company can have the world's best version of a particular product. To say that something is "better" is meaningless, and ads rarely say better than what. Similarly, the student who has called to his attention the fact that almost everyone is in favor of God, Motherhood, and America, may possibly remember political speeches or conversations that affirmed little more than this, and be less impressed by the next one that he hears.

The vagueness and confusion that may be caused by ordinary clichés similarly may impress students once it is called to their attention. Students asked to define precisely "prodigal" often are thoughtful after learning that they have mechanically associated "prodigal" with "repentant" or "wicked" because of the moral of the prodigal son story—and the use of the term as a stereotype. La Brant reported an enlightening conference with a student who had entirely misread a story, it turned out, because of the word "orphan." To this student "orphan" meant "poor, defenseless orphan," and the facts of the story, which showed another kind altogether, simply couldn't push past her cliché concept. Class assignments and campus issues will continually provide examples of this type of thinking, in which the cliché has been accepted by the student, as La Brant says, and allowed "to stand between himself and a fact or understanding."



The garbled or misapplied cliché even more strikingly emphasizes the danger of confusion in the use of clichés, and again, the students often will provide some of their own examples. Analysis of one of these is a good class exercise. One that shows up perennially is taking something "for granite." Freedman offers "Money is the route of all evil," and "He stuck to me like a leash." Morrah points out the unfortunate meaning which "more honored in the breach than the observance" has come to have. A newspaper reported: "Sampling wool, a job previously done by hand, now is done by machines with an accuracy not more than a fraction of 1 per cent." Another, printing an account of a wartime marriage between a soldier in England and his fiancée in Virginia, said that "the marriage was consummated over wires." A Secretary of the Treasury was quoted as affirming: "So I think we are whistling in the dark when we talk of any marked recession."<sup>1</sup>

Thus the cliché habit, the teacher may assure his students, often leads to serious confusion of thought. The addict lets the word or phrase stand for the thing without bothering to check the correlation. Moreover, he thinks and speaks his clichés until they become so worn as to lose almost all meaning for him. He speaks of getting so close to a problem that he can't see the trees for the forest. He writes of a hard struggle as being comparable to Gabriel wrestling with the angel. He talks of a quick-tempered man who doesn't even have the patience of Job. He uses "literally" as a general word of emphasis, and often combines it with a cliché which can be only figurative: he writes that bombers literally went over a portion of enemy territory with a fine-tooth comb, and that when a radar impulse is bounced back off the moon, the earth and the moon literally have shaken hands. He says that to anger one's enemy is to pour oil on troubled waters,<sup>2</sup> and that the peacemaker has poured oil on the flames. He can't hear the word "picnic" without thinking also that if you go on a picnic it's bound to rain, or hear

the word "beauty" without thinking, and often remarking, that beauty is only skin deep. He is lost in such groupings as caught in a backwash of events, whitewashing a character, dispensing eyewash, washing dirty linen in public, washing one's hands of a matter, recognizing something as hogwash, and an affair that is a washout.

In short, one confirmed in the cliché habit reacts to verbal stimuli which may have no more relationship to language meaning or objective fact than the ringing of a bell has to the appearance of food. And by so doing he subjects himself to the wishes of the bell-ringers.

The cliché inevitably works to narrow the range of thought. In a free country it is undoubtedly one of the most widespread and the most insidious processes of mental straitjacketing. It must bear considerable responsibility for the effectiveness of modern propaganda and for the prejudices and slipshod thought which afflict many of us.

Or, it may be of course that the cliché habit is effect rather than cause, that we use clichés because of impoverished thought. In either event, the thought and the expression are so interrelated that an attack on the cliché is also an attack on slipshod thought, on vague thought, on conditioned emotional response substituting for thought. These are more serious evils even than lack of freshness and vigor, and they deserve the greater emphasis in teaching the use of the English language.

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## The National Council of Teachers of English

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# Rebuttal

## A REPLY TO PROFESSOR WARFEL

ALLEN AUSTIN

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Professor Warfel, in "Structural Linguistics and Composition" (*College English*, Feb. 1959), proposes that we substitute structural linguistics for our present methods of instruction in freshman composition. Although his essay is informative and makes some good suggestions (e.g., on introducing children to writing and on revising present handbooks), his theory of composition—that the writing of essays depends primarily on the ability to use various structures in sentences—is, I believe, invalid. For example, he says that a child, who is constantly practicing the structures of spoken language, masters speech by the age of six, but surely Warfel would not maintain that this child, or even a college student, has mastered the composition of a speech. If a student's sentences in an essay are poor, they will also be poor in a speech, for in both cases the basic problem is clarifying, organizing, and communicating ideas.

The student's first task in writing an essay is the clarification of his ideas, actually a process of talking to himself. If he is successful in achieving this clarification, his words and his sentences will be fairly good. Thinking is symbolizing, and ideas and images cannot be separated from words and sentences. Even the use of an image does not depend primarily on words or the structure of words, but on the perceiving of the image. For example, if a student wants to compare one object to another,

he must first perceive the comparison. Similarly, if he wants to write an essay on the relationship of science and religion, he must first understand his conception of this relationship. It is true, as Professor Warfel says, that "a writer's style is based primarily upon his syntactical choices" (p. 209), but these choices are governed largely by his thought, by the way in which he relates and organizes ideas.

The fact that style is inseparably related to thought sometimes makes English teachers uncomfortable, because, like teachers in other disciplines, we have no way of teaching thought directly. We can offer no formulas; we can only point out examples of clear thought and effective style in the hope that the student will gain an awareness of the nature of good prose. We may, of course, analyze style, using the insights made available by structural linguistics. But we cannot give the student practice in sentence patterns, because the patterns depend on the thought that he is expressing. He needs to learn the principles of the parallelism and subordination of ideas, to understand why one pattern is superior to another.

Effective sentence structure, like effective language, is not the cause but the result of clear thinking. Paradoxically, the student learns how to write by concentrating on what he wants to say, by realizing that he is dealing primarily with ideas.

## STRUCTURAL LINGUISTICS AND COMPOSITION: A REJOINDER

JOHN W. HOWARD

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Professor Harry R. Warfel's "Structural Linguistics and Composition" (*College English*, Feb. 1959) is as homiletic a statement of the principles of structural linguistics

as one could wish. One responds favorably to much of it. Few would dispute its claim that "spelling bulks large in the thoughts of most general composition teachers."

None would deny that "Language is the key to the treasure house of humanity." All would revel in having their students "discover the joys of being truly and expertly literate."

But one also wonders how poor spelling may be reformed under a system which regards the word not as a word but as a function of a sentence. One may demur that the classroom—though it is the teacher's life—is not really very much like Life, and that the methods of infantile learning are out of place where neither infants nor infantile subjects are taught. And one must protest some salient inconsistencies, assertions, and implications of the article.

Let one example of simple inconsistency suffice. Professor Warfel bases much of his plea on the axiom that language is arbitrary and social. But in a few sentences, his touchstone turns to slag. He belittles certain arbitrary and social aspects of written language, perhaps because he does not regard the written form as truly language, certainly because "Variant forms of type or script have only such significance as custom assigns them." By way of structural experiment, it is interesting to substitute "language" for the first N-function in that statement. Such substitution is sanctioned, too: "Except for spelling, nouns need no attention at all"; and "every headword is open to endless modification."

Let one example of unverified assertion suffice, too. Professor Warfel does nothing to justify his Wordsworthian notion that the child of six is an expert in language. Clearly, in comparison with what he knew of language at birth, the child is an expert. But in comparison with that of a fluent, enthusiastic adult, does not his expertness fail?

"Not structurally," is the answer. And it is here that the objectionable implications of Professor Warfel's stand enter. There are at least three objections to be made.

The first objection is that no limit is placed upon pattern-imitation as the mode of learning composition. Thus, what makes an adult generally prefer adult conversation has nothing to do with vocabulary, meaning, or relevance. He should enjoy the structural excellence of a six-year-old; that he prefers adult conversation is due to his failure to learn the usefulness and charm of structural linguistics.

Second, one must object that the word "meaning" (or any equivalent N-function group) appears only once, and then in an unimportant structure, in the whole of Professor Warfel's essay. The implication is inescapable that pattern-perfection is the teacher's ultimate goal and that vacuity is its concomitant.

Finally, and most dismaying, is the new prescriptiveness suggested by the article. Linguistics—once the way to freedom of language, the dispassionate describer of language behavior, the warranted guide to the understanding of a language—now grows confining and restrictive. The old non-linguistic "correctness" emerges as structural linguistics "norms." For a touch of the familiar, however, old "demons" are "demons" still.

Thus, as exemplified in Professor Warfel's essay, the structural linguistics approach to composition offers the teacher a "Science" label to put on his work. It offers a new vocabulary, for some of which, at least, the modification "jargon" is an adequate substitute. It allows him a mechanical preoccupation with arrangement, and no troublesome concern with meaning, relevance, or sense. Indeed, if the ghosts of vocabulary and meaning should rise, the composition teacher may exorcise them by murmuring his three hundred "structure words." In sum, his language will be more basic than Basic, his job (to try one more permutation) less basic than base.

#### TO THE EDITOR:

Drs. Austin and Howard apparently use a telephone without discriminating the terms *channel*, *code*, and *message*. A little homework in communication engineering will reveal that the message does not originate the code or give any rules to the channel. The message must fit the code, and the code must be transmittable over the channel.

Psychologists believe that non-verbal thought occurs in image making. Artists see pictures, and musicians hear tunes; they can compose their works without using language. How does anyone make a language message of a non-verbal image if he does not know the language code?

HARRY R. WARFEL

## News and Ideas

THE FEATURE ARTICLE OF THE Fall 1959 *Iowa Yearbook* (formerly the Iowa Council of Teachers of English Yearbook) is a twelve-page attack on the particular vagaries of structural linguistics, together with a general disapproval of traditional grammar and approval of the effort of the new grammarians, by Professor John C. McLaughlin of S. U. Iowa, who concludes: "We have as yet no 'true' description of English grammar. We have only the search for it. But this is a great deal."

FIVE ARTICLES ON THE TEACHING of reading and writing form a section of the oversize November 1959 *Atlantic Monthly*: Louis Zahner (Groton School) on the crisis, in composition, Henry W. Bragdon (Exeter) on teaching writing through History, Henry Chauncey (ETS) on the difficulties facing the English teacher, Robert L. Filbin (elementary school principal) on reading phonetically, and Helen R. Lowe (housewife, mother, and tutor) on students who read "salami" for "Solomon."

WOULD YOU LIKE TO STUDY "The Big Reforms in Soviet Education" this summer, from August 14 to September 17, on an all-expense professional tour for \$1700? The Comparative Education Society and the International Education Commission of Phi Delta Theta (education council) are running the seminar and field study. Write Dr. Gerald H. Read, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio, for application forms.

IF YOU OR YOUR DEPARTMENT has any sizeable number of unused textbooks, you might consider sending them to schools and colleges in Asia via the Books for Asian Students project. "Types of materials needed," according to the Asia Foundation, "are: elementary, secondary and college level textbooks in good condition and published after 1945; classic literature and other standard works published before 1945 in good condition; scholarly, scientific and technical journals in runs of

five years or more." Send to Books for Asian Students, 21 Drumm St., San Francisco 11, Calif., by book rate or motor freight, presenting a postal receipt for reimbursement.

"THE RICHEST PRIZE OFFERED IN the American theatre" will be administered by the chairmen of the English departments of Cornell, Yale, and Princeton. This is \$3000 annually, for the "best piece of drama criticism during the year, whether in an article, an essay, treatise or book," according to Cornell, which will accept entries for the two years ending 31 May 1959 and 31 May 1960 by the latter date. The money was left by George Jean Nathan, Cornell '04.

WHAT YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO expect your freshmen to have had in English studies in grades 1 to 12 is neatly and graphically summarized in the Fall 1959 *Bulletin* of the Kentucky Council of Teachers of English, available at 35c from the KCTE's Executive Secretary (who is also Chairman of the NCTE's College Section for 1960-1961, not to mention Chairman of the Department at the University of Kentucky), Professor William S. Ward.

MARK TWAIN'S SEVENTEEN "happy years" in Hartford are evoked by pictures, letters and comments in the December 1959 *American Heritage* in a presentation that makes vivid the Gilded Age, Twain as an artist, and the tragedy of his later years.

AS FAST AS HANDBOOKS TO scholarly periodicals are published, new magazines come into existence. The latest is *Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature*, whose subject-matter, "although international in scope, will stress the fiction of post World War II America." A well-known scholar and teacher, Professor Frederick J. Hoffman, is chief editor, receiving MSS. at 1118 West Johnson St., Madison 6, where the business manager also receives subscriptions at—can it be true?—\$1.50 for one year.



# Books

## Books about Language

HAROLD B. ALLEN

*A professor of English and Director of the Communication Program at the University of Minnesota, Dr. Allen is a well-known linguistic scholar, author of many articles, editor of Readings in Applied English Linguistics (1958), and author of An Introduction to English Sound Structure (1959). He took his B.A. at Kalamazoo College and his graduate degrees at Michigan. Director of the Linguistic Atlas of the Upper Midwest and twice recently consultant in linguistics to the Egyptian ministry of education, he has also been most active in NCTE activities, serving as chairman of many committees, as Second Vice-President, and, for 1960, as First Vice-President.*

For years linguists and scholars in the English language directed often caustic criticism at the teacher of English because of his prescriptive attitude toward usage and his adherence to unrealistic grammar. But it may be fairly said that this traditionalism was often due not so much to inertia nor to stubbornness as to unfamiliarity with valid evidence opposing his position. With respect to usage it is certainly true that as workers in various fields of linguistics produced valid historical and contemporary evidence, more and more teachers and textbook writers came, and are still coming, to accept the descriptive point of view. Likewise, as linguists publish understandable syntheses of their researches in English structure, more and more teachers and textbook writers can be expected to accept and use these findings.

One special deterrent must be acknowledged. The non-linguist can easily ignore the basic agreement in principle and in method among linguists and instead exaggerate their admitted disagreements in analysis and in interpretation, especially in the newly penetrated field of syntactic structure. The result may be a tendency to reject the linguistic approach out of hand. Indeed, before another composite review like this is printed this tendency may actually be strengthened, because of a book recently published abroad by Noam Chomsky of Massachusetts Institute of Technology (*Syntactic Structures*, The Hague, 1957). Chomsky's approach has already influenced some American linguists and could quite possibly modify even their methodology and hence their analysis and

conclusions in new books certain to appear within the next few years.

The foundation of modern linguistics is, nevertheless, already soundly established; and its basic principles are accepted by linguists without dissent. These principles appear in the first books described below; they appear only dimly or not at all in most of the others. Except for Chomsky's book (omitted because the present scope could not easily include European publications), the twenty-six books received as the material for this article reflect the entire spectrum from advanced research in English linguistics to apparent unawareness even of its existence. Yet in their variety all these books presumably contribute something (or they wouldn't have been written) to the teacher's knowledge of his language or to his library of teaching materials.

These books are not easy to classify. The division is expedient: (I) Seven meet the primary needs of the teacher and prospective teacher seeking sound linguistic information. (II) Ten (8 to 17) meet the primary needs of the student in freshman English or communication. (III) Five (18 to 22) provide general and related background information for the teacher. (IV) Four (23 to 26) form an unclassifiable residue.

### I. MEETING NEEDS OF THE TEACHER

Most of the rapidly accumulating data from linguistic research is still secluded in such specialized journals as *Lingua*, *Word*, *Language*, *Orbis*, *Studies in Linguistics*,

the *International Journal of American Linguistics*, and *Archivum Linguisticum*, where even when ferreted out by the non-specialist it resists his ready comprehension. But knowledge of the contents of four of the seven books in this group (one of the first four, together with the three others) will enable a teacher to use competently and intelligently any of the linguistically oriented composition texts, as well as to apply linguistic analysis judiciously in some literary criticism.

1. Francis, W. Nelson, *The Structure of American English* (Ronald, 1958, 614 pp., \$6.50). This bulky volume, two inches thick, should have been printed on thinner paper. But students will find it worth carrying to class, for it is the first and only comprehensive structural English text specifically aimed at the basic language course without which the preparation of any undergraduate English major is simply deficient.

From a general introduction to "language and linguistics" Francis proceeds smoothly from phonetics to phonemics to morphemics to parts of speech to syntactic structure and then to sentences. Some users may find the first third of the book too detailed and may object to the compulsory shift from standard IPA transcription to Trager-Smith phonemic symbolization. The chapter on the morpheme includes a needed and easily followed step-by-step example of morphemic analysis. On the whole, Francis follows Trager-Smith phonology and accepts Fries's multi-structured word-classes but departs from Fries in the treatment of syntax by according discriminatory importance to pitch and stress. He uses Fries's "situation sentence" and "sequence sentence," but prefers to treat the "included sentence" as an included "clause." His distinctive English verb analysis appears under six heads: person, tense, phase, aspect, voice, and status—an analysis which students have found illuminating except for his inexplicable omission of the subjunctive under any designation. To Francis "mode" refers only to verb-phrases formed with auxiliaries. Nowhere appears recognition of the third person singular *were* nor of the common uninflected third person singular in expressions of hoping, fearing, resolving, and the like.

A perhaps too full chapter on "Graphics" offers some systematic help for poor spellers; a surely too skimpy final chapter on "Linguistics and the Teacher" suggests how the structural approach can be effective in teaching English. Included—although not all teachers will find it relevant to this particular course—is a clear and succinct chapter on distinctive American dialect features by Raven I. McDavid, Jr., a leading linguistic geographer.

The matter of technical words always looms large in a linguistics text for non-linguists. Some teachers who have learned unblinkingly the medieval vocabulary of rhetoric and the subjective jargon of literary criticism boggle at the rigorously precise terminology of the science of language. Upon such people Francis makes a frontal assault with dozens of new or newly defined terms. He might have relented in the chapter on phonetics, but, after all, the teacher of English arguably should acquire some control of the nomenclature—and Francis provides a quite usable glossary.

This is certainly a first-rate introduction for the newcomer to the linguistic approach to English.

2. Sledd, James H., *A Short Introduction to English Grammar* (Scott, Foresman, 1959, 346 pp., \$4). Once thought of as a freshman book—still tentatively so—this is probably better for the junior-senior course in the English language, or even for a graduate course. It is almost an introductory text in linguistics. When the author wrote his cogent critique of the basic works by Fries and by Trager and Smith (*Language*, XXXI, 312-345), he identified himself as no linguist, but the powers of linguistic analysis revealed in this book should make this disclaimer seem false modesty.

Sledd adheres carefully to linguistic principles on a basis frankly described in his introduction, but, unlike Francis, he prefers to yield to the reader's distaste for new terms by avoiding even such elementary designations as *phoneme* and *morpheme*. He also ignores *immediate constituent*, but for another reason. The generally accepted theory of immediate constituents he considers inadequate to explain English syntax, so omits even mention of it except in the glossary. The book has

its own distinctions elsewhere, too. Sledd's phonology manages to combine the vowel system of Kenyon, with both long and short vowels, and the consonant system of Smith, but without the /h/ semi-vowel. Linguists will find themselves accepting Sledd's own epithet for it, "messy," but may disagree as to its superior practicability. Following a Trager-Smith lead Sledd posits two sets of parts of speech, one determined by suffixation and the other by position, e.g., noun and nominal, adjective and adjectival; he thereby facilitates the solution of some classificatory problems left unsolved by Fries's multi-structured form-classes. Sledd will please the composition teacher by his rejecting the linguist's definition of a sentence and by insisting that a sentence have subject and predicate. But he does not object to fragments *per se*.

The second part of the book is a huge glossary of grammatical terms with encyclopedic treatment, a glossary so comprehensive that Sledd suggests that it might be used independently as a textbook. Perhaps.

The third part Sledd calls "Applied English Grammar: Some Notes on English Prose Style." Style, he says, is the result of making linguistic choices. Knowledge of linguistic structure enlarges the area of choice and makes for better style. Since oral and written discourse differ, the conventions of writing must be learned *after* one has learned the conventions of speech. Awareness of the relations between the two helps in manipulating either set of conventions. Here Sledd moves ahead of Francis in applying linguistic information in the job of writing.

3. Hill, Archibald A., *Introduction to Linguistic Structures* (Harcourt, Brace, 1958, 496 pp., \$6.50). The sub-title, "From Sound to Sentence in English," is a better clue to the content of this important work—indeed, a work so important that it ought not be treated in such a summary fashion as the limits of this article require. This is the first comprehensive and consistent single treatment of the phonemics, morphemics, and syntax of English by a major linguistic scientist. As a textbook it does on the graduate level what Francis's book, and in some measure Sledd's, does on the undergraduate level. This leading contribu-

tion to the field owes much to the Trager-Smith "school" of analysis in phonemic study, but it is notably original in its penetrating analysis of English syntax, where very little of the 1952 work of Fries can be detected.

True, Hill does offer some significant new insights with respect to phoneme arrangements (what he calls "phonotactics"), but what teachers of composition and literature will find most stimulating is the material on syntax. Unlike Fries, whose *Structure of English* has been adversely criticized for its avoidance of speech criteria (stress, pitch, and juncture) except to resolve ambiguity, Hill insists that the analyst, and the student, must never ignore these suprasegmental features. In this insistence he arrives at a more realistic and less ambiguous classification of syntactic patterns. Then he quickly glances ahead to the possible breakthrough of linguistics into stylistics and semantics in terms of partially predictable occurrences of "correspondence meanings," i.e., of relation between the linguistic symbol and the non-linguistic environment. To study such meaning Hill would have us begin with the language itself, a refreshingly sane attitude in contrast with that reflected in essays contained in No. 22 below.

For the student oriented only to a modern Indo-European language other than English, Hill includes the uniquely useful appendix containing a structural analysis of Latin, a highly inflected Indo-European tongue, and of Eskimo, a non-Indo-European speech with a structure quite unlike that of English.

Though the book is essentially a climactic development in English linguistic research as a synthesis of what had been presented in bits by various scholars, it is also an important original work of Hill himself, though with some tentative inclusions not yet acceptable to all linguists. More than once a tentative offering or interpretation is presented first as an assumption, then in a later chapter as a likelihood, and subsequently as an unquestioned truth from which we can go on to new interpretations. If the instructor prefers less of such controversial content, then he may want to consider the only other comprehensive text now suitable for a graduate course in Eng-

lish structure, that by Hockett. But to say this is not to deride Hill's valuable book.

4. Hockett, Charles F., *A Course in Modern Linguistics* (Macmillan, 1958, 621 pp., \$7.50). Despite the title and the announced target group, a class in introductory linguistics, this text is also a suitable choice for the basic graduate course in English structure. Hockett himself says that among the "many people [who] have professional need to know something about language is the teacher of English composition." And because he is consistent in illustrating linguistic principles and categories with English examples and in providing exercises in analysis of English, this book is excellent for English graduate students despite the lack of such a detailed treatment of structural patterns as is found in Hill and in Francis.

Hockett has some innovations of his own, such as his descriptive arrows as juncture symbols instead of the arbitrary Trager-Smith || and #, but, less obedient to the categorical imperative of structural symmetry, he holds a middle-of-the-road position among linguists and avoids such controversial extremes as the post-vocalic /h/ (though he approximates it with a symbol /' indicating the presence of an undefined sound-feature). Fellow-linguists might object to some of his definitions, and to his cheerful refusal to accept analyses derived from the insistence upon balance in patterns. They could object more strenuously when he recognizes only two stresses by not including weak stress and by lumping primary and secondary together under the same symbol /' on the grounds that the former is rhetorical. He will confuse some readers with his fuzziness in explaining *idiom* and *lexeme*. He will annoy others with his seven-vowel system which omits /o/ and /i/ and hence seems to rely overmuch upon his own idiolect. On the other hand, he successfully keeps phonology and grammar apart as co-ordinate systems instead of as levels of analysis, with a resulting clarity the reader should appreciate.

A chapter on linguistics and literature is teasingly brief; but the teacher of literature will find stimulating Hockett's provocative treatment of what is here called "deep grammar," a still largely unexplored

area surely significant in the study of clarity in style. The treatment of "idiom," not in the usual sense, is helpful to the teacher of composition.

Unlike Hill and Francis, Hockett offers diachronic (historical) material, too, and thus makes it easier for the teacher to help graduate students to look structurally at comparative Germanic phonology and at both Old English and Middle English phonemics. He deals also with such related topics as innovation and borrowing in English linguistic history.

Each chapter has a brief appendix listing the new terms therein, suggesting some practice exercises, and naming principal relevant bibliographical references.

5. Allen, Harold B., ed., *Readings in Applied English Linguistics* (Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1958, 428 pp., paper, \$3.75). This is an unpretentious volume but so far the only one of its kind. This collection of sixty-five derivative articles from linguistic and professional journals makes available to the teacher and prospective teacher recent studies and opinion in several linguistic and related fields.

6. Thomas, Charles L., *An Introduction to the Phonetics of American English*, 2nd ed. (Ronald, 1958, 273 pp., \$4.50). One of the two books suitable for a course in English phonetics and pronunciation, this revision of the first edition of 1947 moves toward greater awareness of linguistic analysis and the linguistic point of view. Recognition of the phonemic principle enables Thomas, a professor of speech, to discuss the nondistinctive or allophonic variations in idiolects and dialects more precisely and more helpfully than in the first edition. But he is not rigorous in applying the principle, because he actually finds not nine nor even fourteen vowel phonemes but actually seventeen. He would have had eighteen had he included /i/, the absence of which prevents his distinguishing, in my own pronunciation, *Rosa's roses* and *Rose's roses*. The author describes regional variations upon the basis of evidence drawn from his amazing collection of the records of the speech of 14,000 people. Thomas now follows the dialect geographers in rejecting the older loose designation "General American," although he does not accept altogether their geographical

divisions of Northern and Midland. The final chapter on standard pronunciation is sensible.

Thomas's retention of a somewhat peculiar organization of material on the grounds that he has himself found it teachable will continue to bother some users of this otherwise admirable book.

7. Marckwardt, Albert H., *American English* (Oxford, 1958, 194 pp., \$4.50). Although not designed as a textbook, this volume (like an earlier popular treatment by Thomas Pyles) is finding good use in courses in American English—for which oddly enough no specific texts have yet been written. Marckwardt's book actually was prepared for the needs of the mature nonacademic reader interested in the English language in America. Its emphasis, hence, is upon the lexicon, although initially Marckwardt shows how our pronunciation and grammar derive from Elizabethan English and he pays cursory attention to conspicuous changes in sounds and grammar in this country.

The thesis appears thus: "Since the earliest American settlers employed Elizabethan English, it is the highly variable and complex character of that medium that provides us with an explanation of the divergence in the great streams of our language. It remains to be seen how, and through what means, this divergence developed through the course of the intervening centuries." Marckwardt then discusses new words from Indian speech and colonial French and Spanish in "The Melting Pot," the retention of older features in "The Colonial Lag," and new meanings and new forms in "Yankee Ingenuity and the Frontier Spirit." The chapter headed "The Genteel Tradition and the Glorification of the Commonplace" describes how such words as *saloon*, *professor*, and *dinner* underwent semantic change because of shifting currents of morality and economic relations. Because the book was written long before publication, the chapter on "Regional and Social Variation" is unfortunately out of date; it does not reflect the considerable recent activity of regional atlas projects. Respecting usage Marckwardt declares that it is social insecurity that leads to linguistic uncertainty. "It will take at least a half-century or more of a more enlightened attitude toward lan-

guage in the public schools to bring about any perceptible change in this state of affairs." "The Names Thereof" is a chapter about place-names, both specifics and generics, and the last chapter, "The Future of English" calls for a removal of normative taboos as restricting the development of the language.

Lacking is even a sketchy bibliography, which would surely be useful to the student and to the nonspecialist teacher. The index is skimpy. If used as a textbook it must be supplemented by exercise materials of the teacher's own devising. Even so, it is still the best book now available for a general course in American English.

## II. MEETING NEEDS OF THE STUDENT

Imperfect though they may be, the few books intended to introduce linguistic content into the freshman course I cannot readily bring myself to disparage. Anyone attempting the arduous task of producing such a book must have had much experience teaching freshmen and he must be more than casually knowledgeable in the field of linguistics. He must, furthermore, find leisure for a job which is much more difficult and time-consuming than that of turning out a tradition-patterned composition text—and such time is not provided by study grants or Fulbright or Guggenheim research fellowships. Some astute publisher, anticipating the expanding market for such books, ought to commission a team of two or three competent individuals to devote their entire time during a year's leave of absence in preparing the best book possible. In the meantime we shall continue to have books, like those described in the following section, written during what time a dedicated teacher can take from family life and recreation and reading.

8. Lloyd, Donald J., and Harry R. Warfel, *American English in Its Cultural Setting* (Knopf, 1956, 553 pp., \$4.50). Although several years earlier Harold Whitehall had written a small text based upon materials prepared for a television course at Indiana University, this work by Lloyd and Warfel is history-making as the first full-length freshman textbook with linguistic content. Yet, perhaps because it was



in a sense premature, its chief use actually has been in English language and English methods courses. There simply were not yet very many freshman instructors who knew enough about the English language to use this book. Except for a few initial exercises the book lacks a working apparatus—and instructors lacked experience in preparing exercises from this kind of content. Then, for most potential users in 1956 the book looked too much like a straight textbook in linguistics; composition instructors were puzzled when asked to consider it as a freshman composition text. "I wouldn't know what to do with it" was a common reaction. From a linguistic viewpoint the authors unhappily postpone treatment of the phoneme and of pitch until after that of "grammar," and they are somewhat shaky in their phonetics. Nevertheless this text is still not to be sold short. A competent teacher can use it successfully in a freshman course, and will find much of usable value in its post-Friesian analysis of the form-classes and in its demonstration of structural replacement possibilities. And it has two first-rate pioneering chapters on dictionaries and on "Reading by Structures."

9. Roberts, Paul, *Understanding English* (Harper, 1958, 508 pp., \$3.75). Behind this book lay the Lloyd and Warfel precedent and Roberts's own experience in writing the first linguistically-based high school textbook. With *Understanding English* Roberts became the man who more than any other person had built a bridge from linguistic research to the English classroom. Once the student reader recovers from his surprise at the style, clear and direct, friendly and occasionally whimsical but never cute, he finds himself actually acquiring not just new facts but rather an entirely new attitude, a new understanding of his language and his use of it. He comes to see that what he is learning helps him to write better. "This stuff makes sense," one such student exclaimed to his instructor.

Given this re-formed attitude toward the language the student then finds the treatment of spelling helpful because of its dealing structurally with the phoneme-grapheme relationship, continues with a grasping of the correspondences between spoken and written signals of structure,

and goes on to perceive and practice the various possible expansions of sentences through constituent replacements. He then applies structural information in punctuation, usage, and vocabulary acquisition. He pays epitomized but normally adequate attention to the use of the library and to the preparation of the research paper. He studies an eminently sensible chapter on the dictionary and sooner or later—some instructors put this at the beginning of the course—reads about as pointedly practical advice as I have seen, "How to Say Nothing in Five Hundred Words." The student can profit, further, by the productive exercises and writing suggestions which accompany each chapter. For teachers who want a workbook to supplement these exercises the author is now preparing one for early publication.

10. Brown, Dona W., Wallace Brown, and Dudley Bailey, *Form in Modern English* (Oxford, 1958, 338 pp., paper, \$2.90). This, a third freshman textbook incorporating materials and principles of structural linguistics, is a straightforward essay-type presentation of English structure in the Fries tradition. The authors consistently adhere to traditional terms, but with changed meanings. Although they refer to stress and pitch more than Fries does, they nowhere provide any systematic description of these suprasegmental features and they quite ignore phonemics and the significant area of morphophonemics. One result of this slighting of speech phenomena is that when they describe the verb-adverb combination as a "hyphenated verb" they are at a loss to tell the student how to identify one. They describe inflection in terms of spelling, and are so far from awareness of phonetics as to say that *shall* becomes *'ll* when unstressed. Even with their reliance upon Fries they overlooked the findings in his *American English Grammar* about the genitive, for they flatly declare, "The inflected genitive usually expresses the idea of possession." They reason in reverse when they say that in *His father, Charles, was also in the car* Charles is known not to be the subject because a comma comes between it and the verb. They overlook the possibility of such a locution as *To eat then was unthinkable*, for they rule "All English sentences must contain a noun or

proun." They treat punctuation without reference to such correlations as do exist with speech signals. They offer good advice about usage, but with inadequate recognition of Kenyon's important principle of functional variation.

Such evidence must be considered in light of the professed aim, which is to present grammar "as a system of symbolic devices" by which grammatical meanings are expressed. The order of presentation is clear and unobjectionable, proceeding as it does from general principles to the parts of speech as form-classes, then to chapters on syntax and structural layers, and finally to chapters on usage. This is all to the good. It is true that for the linguistically trained instructor the book could be a source of some embarrassment in class because of the frequent need to supplement and even correct the language-based portions; nevertheless its arrangement and content should be much more helpful to a student willing to learn to write than is the usual composition textbook. The appended exercises are full and reflect rich experience in composition teaching. It may be hoped that the book will go into a thoroughly revised second edition. Some users might then like to see included some treatment of dictionaries and of the long term paper.

11. Guyer, Byron, and Donald A. Bird, *Patterns of Thinking and Writing* (Wadsworth, 1959, 386 pp., \$3.95). This is a very able job of giving to the freshman the minimal facts of English structure, with class-tested ways of helping him to use structural modification and variation in his own writing. Unlike the Brown and Wallace work, this book attends not just to the writing but rather to the language itself as secondarily manifested in writing. The first part deals with patterns of thinking (arguably, however, better placed at the end than at the beginning); the second, with patterns of language; the third, with patterns of meaning; and the fourth, with putting the patterns to work. Part Two proceeds from a description of word-patterns to pattern-signals (morphophonemics, actually), and then to a few very practical exercises to aid the student's writing improvement. (More exercises would be useful.) Especially helpful are the chapters on "Using Patterns to Condense and

to Emphasize" and on "Ambiguity." Again the authors make skilful use of pitch and stress and juncture in teaching matters of style. Part Three is semantically oriented, but cautiously written, with chapters as follows: The Word as Symbol, Directions of Meaning in Words, The Effects of Words, Usage (judiciously presented), Using the Dictionary (knowledgeable), Defining Words, and The Function and Effects of Language. Part Four ends with two chapters on the term paper.

12. Macrorie, Ken, *The Perceptive Writer, Reader, and Speaker* (Harcourt, Brace, 1959, 595 pp., \$4.25). This new comprehensive freshman composition and communication text deserves attention here because of the author's prefatory claim that "it has assimilated some of the principles of . . . linguistics, and yet does not speak with its mouth full of them. The chapters on grammar, usage (including a brief Guide to Usage), and mechanics introduce the student to some of the major findings of structural linguistics and in that framework demonstrate how he may improve his use of language."

Without comment upon what seem to be the many excellent other features of arrangement and content of this book, I must admit having to take this claim quite literally, with emphasis upon the "some." The chapter on grammar occupies a total of fourteen pages, including two pages of exercises and a half page of bibliography. This chapter, furthermore, is Chapter 21, almost at the end of the book, and is presumably to be studied nearly at the end of a year during which the students' papers would have been corrected according to the traditional grammatical rules. The author follows Fries almost entirely, though with passing attention to the role of stress and juncture in good writing and punctuation. Two early chapters and the one on usage aid in developing an intelligent attitude toward language matters. This is a textbook worth serious consideration by a department planning to get its feet wet in the cool waters of the linguistic approach, but such a department should realize that it won't get any farther than ankle deep.

13. Dean, Leonard F., and Kenneth G. Wilson, eds., *Essays on Language and Usage* (Oxford, 1959, 335 pp., paper, \$2.50).

This discriminatingly chosen collection of essays is for the instructor who rejects the notion that freshman composition is purely a skills course allowing the use of readings in college life, liberal education, current problems, man and the universe, and what have you. It is for the instructor who holds that the freshman course has its own legitimate content, and that content is precisely the one in which he should be a specialist and not an amateur—language and communication. The authors take as their purpose "To provide a linguistic foundation for the study of rhetoric and composition." It is prepared for use in a freshman class, although possibly a few articles, such as the important one by Whorf, are above the level of many first-year students. Most of the thirty-four selections are chapters or sections from books by linguists and English language scholars, grouped as follows: (1) Dictionaries, Words, and Things, (2) The History of English, (3) The Structure of English, (4) Usage. No selection duplicates any in the collection numbered 5 in this review. The editors offer nearly fifteen pages of "aids to study," consisting of some half-dozen questions apiece for the various articles. These are mostly objective questions on the text, although some require reading of other materials or observing and analyzing some language data. A superior collection for any freshman course, this book is uniquely suited as a companion text to any one of the four books first described here (i.e., 8, 9, 10, and 11 above).

14. Jennings, Charles B., Nancy King, and Marjorie Stevenson, *Weigh the Word* (Harper, 1957, 259 pp., \$2.75). With the same general aim as that of the preceding textbook, this collection includes more popular and less authoritative writings suitable for low-ability freshmen or even for high school students. Authors range from Margaret Schlauch (who despite her prowess as a limerick creator is here the philologist) to Ogden Nash (who is never a philologist), and from Otto Jespersen to Robert Benchley. The first section deals with the history of English and language as a social force, the second with standardizers of the language, and the third with miscellaneous language matters treated humorously and "capriciously" (as by Nash and Benchley, of course). A passage is

included from Eric Partridge, with his notion that colloquial English is not Standard English. The book is advertised as a "wide sampling" of material, but we are not told how literally this expression should be understood. The sampling actually is not only of articles, but of parts of articles, to such an extent that the chosen snippets sometimes fail to give a fair representation of the whole. True, suspension points appear but without indication of how much is omitted. There is no apparatus to help the teacher capitalize upon the book in terms of student projects or writing assignments. Yet for students who would find the Dean and Wilson collection above their heads this book could stimulate interest in language and perhaps in acquiring a more objective attitude toward their use of it.

15. Garey, Doris B., *Putting Words in Their Places* (Scott, Foresman, 1957, 371 pp., \$3). The title might suggest a popular approach to English structure. Actually this book draws nothing discernible from linguistics. It rather purports to help the student to tighten up his "cognitive" use of language, to recognize in practice that even cognitive language has "motive-evaluative" effects, and to deepen his sympathetic awareness of the imaginative use of language in literature. Linking of logic and literary language appears throughout. The author says that there are different types of factual statements, and induces the student to consider ethical and esthetic valuations as well as "practical." Hence the treatment of persuasion, from the point of view of both arguer and receiver, is informal and avoids the discussion of syllogistic and enthymemic reasoning. Persistent attention to emotive-evaluative judgment leads to a fruitful discussion of the problem of reading literature with more than superficial comprehension. The writer has been strongly influenced by Korzybski, but makes a sensible and non-extreme use of general semantics. The exercises insufficiently emphasize actual writing, but they are provocative and helpful. An initial self-inventory exercise seems to me so slanted that any objective determination of attitudes is wellnigh impossible. A brief post-script advocates flexibility in usage, but it is too general to be of much value.

16. Huppé, Bernard F., and Jack Kamin-

sky, *Logic and Language* (Knopf, 1956, 216 pp., \$1.75). Unlike Miss Garey, these authors do attempt a kind of synthesis of the disciplines of logic and linguistics, but without doing full justice to either. It may be objected that they do as much as possible in a book for a single term, but then one wonders why both disciplines need to be treated within the same term. Of the five chapters, only the second and the third, "The Mechanism of Language" and "Meaning in Language," are here relevant. They are surely unobjectionable so far as they go, but their sketchiness cannot help the student reader very much. The structure of language is dismissed in six pages (one of which is devoted to a diagram of the vocal tract); six more pages in chapter 3 somewhat pontifically cover syntactic meaning, and eleven lines tell the student what the authors believe he needs to know about word order!

17. Harris, Robert T., and James L. Jarett, *Language and Informal Logic* (Longmans, Green, 1956, 274 pp., \$3.50): As with the preceding book, despite modern definitions of language and reference to works of linguists, actual attention to language is chiefly in the field of metalinguistic relationships—to referential meaning, to usage (viewed quite objectively), to metaphor, to persuasion (here denominated "language of concerted action"), and to propaganda. It thus reflects the work of logicians, semanticists, and rhetoricians rather than that of linguists. This is not to say that the book is not good. It is, and it is highly usable in a freshman course, but instructors adopting it should not delude themselves into thinking that they are doing very much to help the students understand their language. It could, I should think, appropriately be a second term choice following study of such a text as that by Roberts or by Guyer and Bird. The chapter exercises, it might be added, call for really constructive activity, not just busy work.

### III. PROVIDING RELATED BACKGROUND

The following books are included not only because they have mysteriously come to hand for this review but because in one way or other they do contribute—withal-

though unevenly—to a wider perception of language values.

18. Whatmough, Joshua, *Language: A Modern Synthesis* (New American Library, 1957, 240 pp., paper, 50¢). Intended as a book for the general reader, this is nevertheless a solidly technical and learned production of a distinguished comparative philologist who in recent years has become interested in modern linguists and in the impinging field of "communication theory." It is widely and deeply informative, sometimes engaging with the author's injected personal observations in the tradition of British philology and with his bland retention of British *phonemics* instead of *phonemics*, and sometimes exasperating to the point where I had to put the book aside while I calmed down. Though labeled a synthesis, this work is often less than a series of undigested chunks of material. The chapter titles imply an ordered plan for the whole work, but there is much overlapping and the chapters themselves are too often models of incoherence reflecting on a larger scale the disturbing involuted syntax of the frequent maze-like sentences. (A spot check turned up many with more than 100 words and one that dragged its slow length to 245 words.) As a synthesis the book is more representative than consistent. Whatmough draws data from structural linguistics, for example, and yet would define the parts of speech in terms of functional meaning. Yet on the whole this book is really quite useful in providing a very broad overview—both contemporary and historical—of language study and of work in related areas of mathematics, psychology, neurology, and information theory.

19. Pei, Mario, *Language for Everybody* (Pocket Books, 1958, 340 pp., paper, 50¢; a reprint of a hard-cover edition published by Devin-Adair in 1956). This is the latest and probably the best in a series of popularizations about language and languages. For a dozen years or so, Pei, a Romance philologist, has sought to give the non-academic and non-linguistic reader information about the study of language. With the exception of Robert A. Hall, Jr., no linguist has had this quite creditable objective. Early books in the Pei series offered

much information—but also much misinformation. The present volume, appearing after sharp attacks upon its predecessors, reveals a clearer grasp of English phonetics and some measure of acceptance of the linguistic axiom that writing is not language. In his popularization the author handicapped himself, as before, by deciding to use re-spelling rather than phonetic transcription. What his re-spellings mean for the different languages exemplified is anybody's guess.

The book has a strongly hortatory bent, i.e., toward the mastery of standard English; but the book's miscellany of information is not entirely calculated to achieve that particular goal. Chapter headings are: Language in Daily Life, Language in the Laboratory, History of Language, Sociological Implications, Languages in Comparison, and Some Practical Language Hints. Perhaps of considerable introductory value for the nonacademic reader, the book is less suitable to the teacher of English than are other sources of language information.

20. Bryant, Donald C., ed., *The Rhetorical Idiom* (Cornell, 1958, 334 pp., \$6). This *Festschrift* for Professor Herbert A. Wichelns of Cornell contains seventeen essays on rhetoric, oratory, language, and drama. Many of these should be of some concern to teachers of English, but only two reflect a linguistic interest. Charles K. Thomas, in "The Linguistic Mason and Dixon Line," draws from his collection of more than 10,000 speech records the evidence for isoglosses separating Northern and Midland pronunciations of *on*, *greasy*, and *grease* (vb.). This is an important factual study, although additional lexical and syntactic evidence from the Linguistic Atlas files probably would push northward the westward extension of this dialect boundary. In the other essay, "Significance of Verbalization in Psychological Test Responses," Franks S. Freeman shows how such responses may reveal certain types of non-normal behavior states. These findings directly concern the teacher of literary criticism as well as the teacher of composition. The latter may sometimes tend to teach absolutes in style, whereas certain forms, such as the passive construction, may be related to personality traits and hence

for any given individual not subject to general rhetorical rules.

21. Henle, Paul, ed., *Language, Thought, and Culture* (Michigan, Press, 1958, 273 pp., \$4.95). Here are nine essays which, though unobtrusively individually authored, are essentially the synthesis of a year-long series of discussions held at the University of Michigan by a group of scholars in anthropology, literary criticism, philosophy, psychology, sociology, and linguistics brought there for this purpose through the support of a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. Four of the nine pertain to the teacher of English who is willing to profit from looking at the correlation between language data and data from other disciplines, but the others should be read, too, once the book is available.

The first essay treats dispassionately the partly controversial Whorf-Hoijer hypothesis concerning the relationship between cultural norms and linguistic patterns, with an exposition of the case for language as influencing the general organization of experience. There are clear implications for critics who like to find "universals" in literary works. The second essay, "The Growth of Concepts," attends psychologically the process by which meanings change, as Old English *feob* to Modern English *fee*. In the third essay, "A Stimulus-Response Analysis of Language and Meaning," psychological research is drawn upon for a new approach to the problem of how the structure of a language enables us to understand statements that we have never heard before and to say things that we have never said before. The fifth essay, "Some Aspects of Language," studies nine aspects of a linguistic utterance over and beyond its "conceptual content." The literary explicator will here find insights leading to new interpretations. Although the seventh chapter, "Metaphor," adds no discoveries but rather attempts to fit old theories into a general theory of symbolism by semantic analysis, it has a special value through the discussion of the ways in which a metaphor becomes literal.

Marginal though much of the content is, with respect to the day-to-day operation of an English class, the English instructor will find not unrewarding at least a rapid reading of this soundly based collection.



22. Anshen, Ruth Nanda, ed., *Language: An Enquiry into Its Meaning and Function* (Harper, 1958, 366 pp., text edition, \$4.50). This collection stands in complete contrast with the preceding. Despite the promising title, this volume will be more amazing than informing for the worker in linguistics or for anyone seeking to learn more about linguistics or language. Amazement begins with the editor's opening statement of the book's theme: "Language exists *ab eterno*, immutable in its transcendent priority and revealing itself from time to time in the historical existence of mankind." Without stopping to reveal just how she found this out, she next raises gooseflesh by proclaiming that this way of considering language seems to be necessary now since "words often change their essential meaning and assume that which is arbitrarily imposed; the eternal idea in language is violated, and thus a collapse of the moral conscience takes place."

But the reader has no chance to recover from his fearful amazement at this metaphysical balderdash. He moves on to consternation as he finds contributor after contributor soaring in ever-higher circles in a verbalized stratosphere. Of the nineteen writers represented only two are specialists in language study; the others offer a mélange of interests covering poetry, criticism, political science, philosophy, Hindu mysticism, and theology. It is certainly valuable to bring together leaders from these various fields, but, although the writer did not achieve complete consistency among her contributors, an obvious bias in selecting them led to a fairly general rejection of an empirical, to say nothing of a scientific approach to the study of language. Yet it is revealing—and disillusioning—to learn what some leaders in other disciplines think of language, or of what they think is language. (One contributor, Francis Fergusson, discusses "Language of the Theater" as including nonverbal means of communication in the theater, a topic which is indeed, as he laments, "unmanageable." Had he confined himself to the specific activities of gestures, facial movements, the use of vocal qualifiers, and the like—the total of the kind of thing subsumed under "kinesics"—he would have been able to say something significant, however, in terms of

referential meaning. Another contributor, the critic Richard P. Blackmur, accomplishes the *tour de force* of writing a whole essay about "The Language of Silence" which is not about language at all but is rather about its absence!)

Nevertheless, despite the lack of any clear definition of language as considered by these writers, a reader can extract from the book some stimulating ideas. These brief notes can point one to essays worth reading.

Leo Spitzer, one of the two philologists, writes on "The Language of Poetry." "Language," he says, "offers us a means for freeing us from this world thanks to its metaphysical and poetic implications." But this freeing is still in terms of its past—here he perhaps unwittingly echoes the Whorfian hypothesis—for "the burden of age-old myths still weighs too heavy on our words to allow them to expose the myths of our time." The other philologist, Roman Jakobson, discusses "The Cardinal Dichotomy of Language" as consisting of similarity or metaphor, on the one hand, and contiguity or metonymy on the other. The latter, he finds, predetermines the realistic trend between romanticism and symbolism; the former is primal in each of these two schools.

In addition, W. H. Auden contributes not an essay but a series of epigrams which must be read and not summarized. C. W. Morris, in "Mysticism and Its Language," writes provocatively of the role of contradiction as "the symbolization of two simultaneously imagined experiences." Harold Lasswell, in "The Language of Politics," describes how language (i.e., vocabulary) is refashioned when it is employed as an instrument of power. Himself somewhat hortatory, Lasswell states that "ultimately our task is to discover how language can become a more efficient means of subordinating power values to the shaping and sharing of other human values." I suspect that a teacher of literature could say that this is what he too is trying to do, although without describing his work in just such terms. And Jean de Menasse writes significantly about "A Philosophy of Translation," especially the translation of poetry. To him words cannot be dissociated from

what they express; "however lucid and direct, they are part of the message conveyed." He adds his belief that "the recent work of linguists" is "of use to the literary critic when dealing with the poetic, i.e., with the *creative* use of language." But he does not show specifically what he thinks this use might be.

There is a very full index.

#### IV. CONTRIBUTING MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

These four books are really not quite relevant to this particular article, but they appeared in the mail as part of the assigned corpus; I dutifully list them.

23. Monson, Samuel C., *Word Building* (Macmillan, 1958, 153 pp., paper, \$2. A separate answer book is available.) This intelligently-contrived tear-sheet workbook is a device for stimulating vocabulary growth; it obviously was prepared with full recognition that such growth comes primarily through getting meaning from content. The exercises are offered simply and unpretentiously as a support to this belief. Monson warns of the danger of using etymology as a major guide to meaning; he carefully employs semantic changes as the vehicle for leading the student from familiar meanings of roots and components to new and unfamiliar meanings. Sensible typography and other mechanical features add to the value of this little book.

24. Lumpkin, Ben Gray, *Words and Sentence Patterns* (University of Colorado Bookstore, 1959, 67 pp., paper, \$1.50). Prepared by a teacher of long experience in teaching writing, the material in this outline is about as cogently set forth as the essentials of traditional grammar can be. Despite the implications of the second part of the title, the contents bear no indication that anything new has been discovered about English grammar during the past generation; parts of speech are defined much as the Greeks defined them two thousand years ago.

25. Bernstein, Theodore, *Watch Your Language* (Channel Press, 1958, 276 pp., \$3.95). Much of this book originated in pungent bulletins on good English prepared for the *New York Times* editorial staff by the author, who also is the assistant manag-

ing editor. The dust jacket blurbs thus: "Certain to take its place in the writer's library with Fowler, Roget, and a good dictionary." Indeed, for freshman English instructors and their charges it probably is much more useful and realistic than Fowler (although any of the major college dictionaries actually contains the information underlying most of Bernstein's critical dicta. But the book is good for the young writer because of Bernstein's sensitive dislike of imprecision. He likes clean and lean prose. (What would he say to Miss Anshen's "collapse of the moral conscience" because "the eternal idea in language is violated"?) Though mildly conservative in usage he is by no means hidebound. He is somewhat confused, by the term "colloquial," which like some handbook writers he employs as a derogatory epithet. Yet the august *Times* is observably not above an occasional unbending toward conversational style.

The book has three sections. First is a lively alphabetically arranged list of words that need watching—with Bernstein's pointed comments. Second is a section on "story-telling," in the newsroom sense. Much of his advice, however, is pretty good for any writer at any time, although the English instructor will not accept every *locus criticus*. Finally there is a section on "Syntax sinners," with clear and sensible help for college writers. The appendix includes several news stories from the *Times* which should be valuable as composition models in classes having news-writing exercises.

26. West, Michael, and P. F. Kimber, *Deskbook of Correct English* (Longmans, Green, 1958, 191 pp., \$2.50). With four excellent up-to-date desk dictionaries available in the United States I can't imagine why a publisher should bring out here a book like this, nor why anyone here should buy it. This is a British-oriented dictionary of spelling, punctuation, grammar, and usage. It has certain interesting gimmicks such as the use of boldface letters to mark trouble spots in spelling, and the symbol /U/ to show that a foreign word should be underlined in writing. It offers some help in replacing pompous terms by more desirable ones. It uses CJ to label commer-

cial jargon, though there are no comparable symbols for literary jargon, musical jargon, and the like. Its indications of preference are always for British, not American, variants. The book contains some of the familiar shibboleths that fail to accord with usage in either country (e.g., *aggravate* meaning "annoy"). It makes the debatable statement that 'd stands for *should*, a phonetically unsound superstition derived from

the notion that *shall* or *should* are required after *I* or *we*. The closing entry should be quoted in full: "Yankee—was a term of contempt applied by people in the Southern States to persons living in the North during the American Civil War. It should never be used in the present day." So far as America is concerned that last sentence could fit the book too.

## Other Books

THE ELEMENTS OF STYLE, William Strunk, Jr., and E. B. White (Macmillan, 1959, 81 pp., paper, \$1.25). If no phenomenal textbook, this pamphlet is a publishing phenomenon. Printed privately in 1918 for the late Professor Strunk's classes at Cornell, it remained obscure until Mr. White recalled it and its author in a *Talk of the Town* squib. Somewhat modernized, it has been on the best-seller lists ever since. Aside from White's introduction, it contains five brief chapters, one by White, "An Approach to Style," to replace Strunk's on spelling, and four by Strunk providing rules for punctuation, injunctions concerning sentence structure, and glossaries of manuscript form and correct diction. White has excised some Strunkian dicta, one suspects wisely, but has treated his old mentor gently, trying "to preserve the flavor of his discontent." He has also modernized somewhat and has sprinkled salt of his own—"The split infinitive is another trick of rhetoric in which the ear must be quicker than the handbook." The treatment is generally authoritarian, but on the whole sensibly so. Rule 5, "Do not join independent clauses by a comma," is tempered with the admission that very brief clauses and "certain colloquialisms are better punctuated with a comma than a semicolon." The book contains no exercises, little mention of such subjects as vocabulary, organization of paragraphs and longer compositions, grammatical structure, and a number of others which composition teachers commonly look for. Even as a treatment of usage it is not impeccable; *worth-while* is spelled as no modern dictionary spells it, and one wonders who

"Webster" is. If the authors mean Noah Webster, he had little to do with any work published after 1828, and more than one hundred and fifty dictionaries bear his name. The book is highly readable, especially White's chapter; composition instructors will want to know it, and students may well be required to devour it, but I suspect that few teachers will wish to rely upon it as the main staff in freshman English. White offers an engaging picture of Strunk grasping his lapels, leaning far over the desk, and whispering everything three times. Apparently this worked for Strunk, but some of us will not want to fill the hour by repeating ourselves deliberately. Others may not be blessed with adequate lapels and a conspiratorial voice.

CHARLTON LAIRD

UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA

READINGS IN APPLIED ENGLISH LINGUISTICS, ed. Harold B. Allen (Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1958, 428 pp., paper, \$3.75). The day when college English teachers were expected to know something of the history of the language to justify their Ph.D's in "philology" has been superseded by the day when they should know this plus something about the actual structure of the living language itself—how it is spoken, and how the speech patterns and usage influence how it is written expositively and imaginatively. Unfortunately for us in 1960, there is no one book or set of books that puts forth these revolutionary notions with the order and comprehensiveness needed by the majority of English teachers. A part remedy for this lack is the

collection by Professor Allen (Minnesota) of classic articles, chapters, and reviews that bear on structural linguistics, linguistic geography, linguistics and usage, linguistics and grammar, linguistics and composition, linguistics and literature. The anthol-

ogy contains 65 items organized into topics and oriented by the editor's utmost clarity and tact. In the process of spreading the word about the new linguistics, Dr. Allen's canon of texts is likely to be the most helpful document available.

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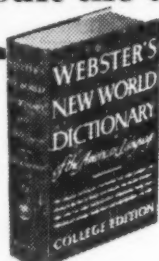
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